POSSIBLE EXPANSION OF SANT~~E~~A FE NATIONAL CEMETERY

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON
HOUSING AND MEMORIAL AFFAIRS

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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CONTENTS

JULY 22, 1983

Page

Possible Expansion of Santa Fe National Cemetery 1

OPENING STATEMENTS

Chairman Shelby 1
Hon. Bill Richardson 45

WITNESSES

Anaya, Hon. Toney, Governor, State of New Mexico 6
Betoney, Nelson, Deputy Director, Office of the Navajo Veterans Affairs, Window Rock, Navajo Nation, Ariz 33
Bingaman, Hon. Jeff, a U.S. Senator from the State of New Mexico 10
  Prepared statement of Senator Bingaman 65
Block, Donny, on behalf of the DAV and New Mexico veterans 39
Castillo, Nahum, Assistant Director, Albuquerque Veterans' Administration Regional Office 12
  Prepared statement of Mr. Castillo 68
Garcia, John, Vietnam Veterans of New Mexico 20
  Prepared statement of Mr. Garcia 85
Gattas, Ron, Zia Chapter, Paralyzed Veterans of America 18
  Prepared statement of Mr. Gattas 82
Goldman, Les, Jewish War Veterans 22
  Prepared statement of Mr. Goldman 88
Jaramillo, Robert C., AMVETS 29
Jim, Raymond, Four Corners Navajo Veterans, Inc 32
  Prepared statement of Mr. Jim 92
Kamicar, James R., president, mortgage loan division, First National Bank, Albuquerque, N. Mex. 14
  Prepared statement of Mr. Kamicar 81
Lujan, Hon. Manuel, a Representative in Congress from the State of New Mexico 3
  Prepared statement of Congressman Lujan 49
Lujan, Rudolpho, superintendent, Santa Fe National Cemetery 14
  Prepared statement of Mr. Lujan 76
Montano, Hon. Louis R., mayor, city of Sante Fe, N. Mex 9
  Prepared statement of Mayor Montano 62
Ortiz, Joseph P., State vice chairman, American GI Forum of New Mexico .....
Rocco, Richard, director, New Mexico State Veterans Service Commission 22
  Prepared statement of Mr. Rocco 89
Sandoval, Samuel, Four Corners Navajo Veterans, Inc 32
  Prepared statement of Mr. Sandoval 92
Santillanes, Tony, the American Legion 28
  Prepared statement of Mr. Santillanes 90
Tafoya, Al 36
Urioste, Juan, department commandar, DAV 29
Vigil, Leroy, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Department of New Mexico 19
  Prepared statement of Mr. Vigil 83
Wheaton, Ernie, alternate national executive committee, State of New Mexico 29

POSSIBLE EXPANSION OF SANTA FE NATIONAL CEMETERY

FRIDAY, JULY 22, 1983

House of Representatives,
Subcommittee on Housing and Memorial Affairs,
Committee on Veterans' Affairs,
Santa Fe, N. Mex.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:30 a.m., in Apodaca Hall, PERA Building, Hon. Richard Shelby (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Present: Representatives Shelby and Richardson.

Also present Representative Manuel Lujan.

OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN SHELBY

Mr. **Shelby**. This subcommittee will come to order.

We are meeting here in Santa Fe, N. Mex., for the purpose of conducting an oversight hearing on the need for expanding the National Veterans' Cemetery, and/or the need for a State veterans' cemetery. Additionally, the subcommittee that we are on is interested in how the VA guaranteed home loan program is working in the State of New Mexico.

This hearing was specifically requested by a very able and important member of the Veterans' Affairs Committee, Hon. Bill Richardson, who is on my left. We are also privileged to have with us this morning Hon. Manuel Lujan.

I want to mention further the Vietnam Veterans' National Memorial at Angel Fire which was recently dedicated on May 30. I watched national coverage of the dedication and must say that the monument is most impressive and a very fitting tribute to our Vietnam veterans, many of whom are in the room today.

The VA National Cemetery System consists of 108 operating national cemeteries located in 40 States and Puerto Rico. Currently, only 55 are open to new burials. Out of these, it is estimated that only 43 will be able to meet veterans burial needs beyond the year 2000, some 17 years hence.

The committee is pleased that overall the VA has been able to achieve its objective of providing one large national cemetery for each of the 10 standard Federal regions since it took over the operation of the National Cemetery System in 1974, but the National Cemetery System as it exists today cannot possibly meet the expanding burial needs for our veterans and their dependents.

As most of you are aware, this country has a rapidly aging veteran population. The average age of World War I veterans is approximately 85 years, and our 12 million World War II veterans are approaching the immediate age of 65. Something must be done to insure that we will be able to meet the burial needs of these men and women.

The subcommittee is also interested in looking at the VA guaranteed loan program, as I mentioned earlier, the existing work loads and the quality of service rendered by the Veterans' Administration Regional Office in New Mexico to the veterans of the State of New Mexico. Since the beginning, the VA home loan guarantee program has been essential to private lenders and has extended housing credit assistance of more than $204 billion to 11 million veterans to purchase or construct new homes.

It is needless to say that overall it has been a successful program. So successful, as a matter of fact, that in a recent study conducted by a committee, it was shown that the VA is hard pressed to keep up with the heavy volume of loan applications and to process them on a timely basis.

On the other end of the scale, however, foreclosures on delinquent property are also at an all-time high due to the rampant unemployment. It is estimated that over 800,000 veterans are currently out of work in this country. It is the committee's belief that some form of mortgage foreclosure relief needs to be provided to assist our veterans to keep their homes during the interim period of economic adversity.

H.R. 2948, a bill which I introduced and which my colleague, Mr. Richardson, co-sponsored, would provide financial assistance up to $8,400 at the Administrator of VA's discretion to veterans who through no fault of their own have fallen behind in the mortgage payment as a result of unemployment or underemployment.

This program would enable a veteran to keep his home and would save the Federal Government by eliminating much of the high cost now incurred by the Veterans' Administration in paying claims of lenders, instituting foreclosure procedures, and reselling and fixing up reacquired properties.

H.R. 2948 passed the House, just like my colleague, Mr. Richardson mentioned in the press conference, last May by a wide margin; and I understand that the Senate will be considering a similar proposal, although they did kill this bill initially.

This hearing marks the first of what I hope will be a series of hearings in the field around the country. It is important for us, as Members of Congress, to get away from Washington and come back to New Mexico and to Alabama and California and other States where the people are and where the veterans are affected.

I want to first recognize, again, my colleague from New Mexico, Mr. Richardson, for any opening statement he wants to make.

[The prepared statement of Congressman Shelby appears on p. 41.]

Mr. **Richardson**. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I just want to submit my statement for the record.

Mr. **Shelby**. Without objection, it will be included as part of the record in its entirety.[1]

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[1] See p. 45.

Mr. **Richardson**. And I just would like to again stress the importance that you attached to the cemetery issue and to the guaranteed housing program. I think it is a great necessity. I see many veterans here from my third congressional district, not just from the northern part of New Mexico, Espanola, Las Vegas, and Taos areas, but I understand that we have veterans that are native Americans from Gallup and McKinley County and San Juan area that are Navajos that are greatly in need of veterans' assistance as are some of the native Americans in the Pueblos in this surrounding area.

Mr. Chairman, I just would like to again thank you for coming to Santa Fe and dealing with our problems; and I look forward to the hearing.

Mr. **Shelby**. Thank you.

Mr. **Shelby**. Our first witness, and he will later join us on the panel, will be our colleague from Albuquerque, Hon. Manuel Lujan, who is no stranger to you. He has been in Congress some 15 years and he has been active in this area and in veterans' affairs. He is interested in the cemetery and the housing programs.

Congressman, I want to welcome you to your State. Any written testimony will be submitted in its entirety for the record. And as a veteran of Congress for some 15 years, you say what you will.

STATEMENT OF HON. MANUEL LUJAN, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO

Mr. **Lujan**. Thank you very much, and I do ask that the statement be included in the record.[1]

Mr. **Shelby**. Yes, and we will keep it open for any further statements that you or Congressman Richardson would like to put in later or add to it.

Mr. **Lujan**. Thank you.

When you say from Albuquerque, some of my friends here think that is kind of strange because Santa Fe is where I was born and raised and lived most of my life, so I can have two home towns, I guess.

Well, Mr. Chairman, we have in New Mexico two national veterans' cemeteries. One at Fort Bayard, which is about 250 miles away from here; and the one in Santa Fe. The one at Fort Bayard still has a lot of room to it, but it is rather impractical, as you can see, for people in this area because of the distance. At the Santa Fe cemetery, they are now developing an additional 13 acres, which will give us, as Congressman Richardson said, until 1997 at the rate of burials that we have now. So we are facing the filling up of that cemetery.

There are, fortunately, 47 acres immediately adjacent to the Santa Fe National Cemetery. Those 47 acres are owned by the Dempsey Estate, which has all of that northern part of the city; and I believe that the city owns an eighth portion of that. So that if we were able to acquire that, the cost is about $600,000, maybe $700,000 now, that some arrangement could be made with the city that they forego their one-eighth interest.

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[1] See p. 49.

For a number of years, I have been trying to get those $600,000 or $700,000, but as you may remember, the last time that I brought up the amendment on the floor, Sidney Atchers, the chairman of the Subcommittee on Appropriations, felt that there was no way that they were going to put it in.

So I think as far as the Santa Fe cemetery is concerned, that what we need is a real interest on the part, and I am glad that you came, on the part of your subcommittee to help us push it. As a matter of fact, I have a bill. It is H.R. 2020, requesting the $600,000 appropriation for purchasing that.

So that is the first request that I would make of the subcommittee. And I know with Bill on that subcommittee that that can come about, but that really would solve——

Mr. **Shelby**. We will give that a high priority. Don't you agree, Congressman?

Mr. **Richardson**. [Mr. Richardson indicated yes.]

Mr. **Lujan**. I think that can be worked out.

The second item that I would like to speak to you about, and I will come up there so I can use the map, is a proposal to open a national cemetery in Albuquerque.

Now, that is not a competition between Santa Fe and Albuquerque at all. I would like to see both things done, but here is where we are at with this proposal.

While looking for money for the Santa Fe cemetery, the Veterans' Administration in Washington, Mr. Walters wrote me a letter and said, "You know, there is another program where there can be State veterans' cemeteries in which the National Veterans' Administration"——

Mr. **Shelby**. Can I interrupt you just a second? We don't have this very often. I just wanted to acknowledge and welcome to the subcommittee hearing the Governor of New Mexico, Hon. Toney Anaya. Most of you know him.

Governor, will you stand up?

Governor, after the Congressman finishes his remarks, we would welcome any remarks that you might want to make.

Governor **Anaya**. Thank you very much.

Mr. **Shelby**. Go ahead, Mr. Congressman.

Mr. **Lujan**. So, at that point, the letter came back from the Veterans' Administration saying we could have a State veterans' cemetery on a 50-50 basis; and that part of that 50 percent could be in the form of land or whatever we might come up with. I think the limit is about $700,000. I am not exactly positive about that, but that seems to be in the back of my mind.

So, of course, we needed then to identify some land in Albuquerque where we might have it. We had a meeting with the heads of the various veterans' organizations, and it was held in Albuquerque, and naturally, they were very enthusiastic. And I might give you some of the reasons why in Albuquerque it makes sense.

As I said in my opening remarks, there are 137 veterans in the State of New Mexico. Not quite half, but almost half of all the veterans live in Albuquerque. It is a little difficult sometimes, particularly in the wintertime, to come up to Santa Fe. We need also to look at a way to relieve the number of burials in the Santa Fe cemetery. So, that it just really makes sense that if we establish one in Albuquerque, that the veterans from that area would be buried there and that relives the pressure over here because there is a limited amount of land.

Through my different travels throughout the State, and I have visited with the Governor, the State life commissioner, the mayor, and all of those people, and you people, you have some letters attached to my testimony of their support. Not just verbal support, but they are saying, "Hey, let's go ahead and do it and we will look at some way of facilitating that land transfer."

So, this map is a map that we have compiled that shows: The pink is State lands in and around Albuquerque, the blue are city lands in and around Albuquerque, the yellow, as you will see, are Indian reservations; the green are Bureau of Land Management and Forest Service, all Federal lands. So we have pretty well identified where that cemetery might be.

We also have a proposal that if we want it closer, there is a land grant group in Albuquerque called the Westland Corp. It is a group of people who inherited that land as heirs, and they have said:

> If you want it closer, we would be happy to exchange on a dollar-for-dollar basis, with the city, county, State, Federal, whoever it may be; and then the national cemetery could be located right in the middle of Albuquerque.

We are rather ambitious. We have not considered any piece of land that is less than 200 acres. That is the figure that we have been talking about. Probably begin to develop, say, 50 acres; and that would take us for a long, long time. But as time goes on, why we would need more land and then we would not find ourself in the same situation that we are here.

So, as I say, there is great support for it; city, county, State, and Federal officials. To be very honest with you, I don't think that there is anything in the Federal domain that is going to make a lot of sense. And, Governor, probably the State lands are the ones that make most sense.

Jim Baca and I have been talking about those 1,200 acres right near the airport. I don't think that that is feasible. I have a feeling that that is land in trust for the benefit of the university, and I don't know that it can't be used for that purpose.

But in any event, there is plenty of other State land. That is the river right here. We have the West Mesa. And as you see, the State has several parcels in there and the city has several parcels. Here is the mountains and the city and the State have some parcels over on the other side. Probably doesn't make a lot of sense to put it on the east side of the mountain. Probably the very best suggestion would be if we could use that university land. The second best suggestion is that there might be some exchange with the Westland Corp. Then, of course, the third one would be out in the west, in the West Mesa.

So, I would ask the support of the subcommittee in that project. I think it is a feasible project. I think it is something that needs to be done.

I think we are pretty close, too, except for the moneys and that also comes to bear; but so far as the land is concerned and as a matter of fact, tomorrow in Albuquerque we will have a meeting with the various city, county, State, those sort of entities, to see if we can begin zeroing in at least on what parcel of land we might be able to use.

So, the two requests that I would have from the subcommittee would be the suport of H.R. 2020 for the additional money for here and the support of the Albuquerque idea.

Thank you very much.

Mr. **SHELBY**. We appreciate you testifying, and if you want, please join us on the panel.

Governor, we are pleased to be here again. Some of us have been in the great State of New Mexico and in Albuquerque and Santa Fe and some of the other cities before and we are always glad to get back. It is a great place to live. Although I am from the Deep South, I admire the open spaces, and the clean dry air out here. We have so much humidity in Alabama.

Governor, we welcome any remarks that you would care to share with us.

STATEMENT OF HON. TONEY ANAYA, GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO

Governor **ANAYA**. Mr. Chairman, thank you very much. First of all, on behalf of the people of the State of New Mexico generally, and of veterans in New Mexico specifically, let me not only welcome you to New Mexico, but thank you for bringing your subcommittee hearings here to look into the number of matters that are obviously of great concern to our veterans. I would also like to thank Congressman Richardson for his initiative in having invited the subcommittee here.

As Congressman Lujan has already alluded to in his presentation, he has had a number of discussions with me personally and other State officials with respect to the need to be expanding the veterans' cemetery capabilities within the State of New Mexico. The State of New Mexico is prepared to assist in any way that we can at all.

I would like to summarize very quickly where I see the various proposals from the State's point of view.

As I had earlier indicated to Congressman Lujan and he indicated today, I expressed my support for his efforts to try to create a veterans cemetery in Albuquerque. The problem that we have run into, quite frankly, is one that is not new to this subcommittee or Congress in these hard economic times. The problem that we would be looking at is not so much in creating the cemetery, but in maintaining the cemetery if it were to be created in Albuquerque.

As I understand, and I may be wrong in my understanding, but as I understand, there can only be one so-called national cemetery within New Mexico, which is the one that is in Santa Fe. If we were to create a second cemetery for the veterans in Albuquerque, it would have to be under a different arrangement; one whereby the State basically would have to be looking at a substantial annual cost for the upkeep and maintenance. That, frankly, would create a very serious problem not just in terms of dollars, but that is obviously an important consideration, and could create an obstacle in terms of us trying to get the necessary legislative approval if they were looking at a very substantial expenditure on an annual basis to upkeep a cemetery.

Thus, we continue our support to the Congress and Congressman Lujan and Congressman Richardson in any way that we can help in trying to bring about the necessary land transfers.

I would have to be very candid to indicate that if we are looking at any substantial annual appropriation on the part of the State to maintain a veterans cemetery in Albuquerque, that that well could be an obstacle that we couldn't overcome.

With respect to the proposal to expand the national cemetery here in Santa Fe, again we stand ready to assist in that regard. It appears that the only feasible land, from what I understand, is privately held land in terms of trying to expand the cemetery here.

The private land apparently would be available either for exchange or for purchase. The purchase price I am told is some $4 million or somewhere in that neighborhood. It is a very choice land, obviously, and it being very close to the city of Santa Fe and the land values around Santa Fe are undoubtably the highest anywhere in the State. They are almost comparable to many of the areas back East and in Washington, D.C., and some of the other high rent districts. So the price may or may not be prohibitive from the standpoint of either the Federal or the State or both of us trying to buy it.

Something that would be feasible, since we have so many tracts in this State, in fact, the largest majority of the State is owned by the Federal Government, would be to try to work out some land transfer between the BLM and the private interests. I understand that those who own the land in and around the Santa Fe cemetery would be interested in an appropriated transfer of land with the BLM elsewhere.

I would highly encourage this subcommittee to assist in that effort. My relationship, frankly, with the head of the Department of Interior is not the best, so I could probably not negotiate that myself, but perhaps the Congress could be very helpful there.

Again, without a lead in to sound like we may be giving our total commitment but hedging on it, we do want to offer any assistance that the State can provide, but it would, to me, at this particular point, seem to be more feasible to try to work out a land transfer for Santa Fe cemetery to expand that cemetery and to try to find some Federal land we could exchange with the private owners.

Beyond that, Mr. Chairman, I would be happy to try to respond to any questions either on this issue or any other issues that are concerned with the veterans in the State. They obviously have the same problems and maybe to a higher degree as veterans in any other State whether we are talking about their housing problems or their health problems.

We were recently, this last legislative session, able to finally get the necessary legislation to start opening up a nursing home for veterans in New Mexico, something we have been fighting for for many years. We are happy to have been able to accomplish that, but there are many unmet needs in this State, and we are quite concerned whenever we see the way in which the priorities at the Federal level seem to be going in the cutbacks and social programs and domestic spending. Every time those cutbacks are made they obviously impact on the programs that benefit needy individuals, including the veterans of this country.

Mr. **Shelby**. Governor, we appreciate your candid remarks and your appearance before the subcommittee.

Bill, do you have any questions of the Governor?

Mr. **Richardson**. I just want to commend the Governor, first of all, for showing up here indicating his strong interest, and for the fact that he stood for veterans when he was a candidate for Governor and now that he is Governor, he is following through, I think not only with a Carrie Tingley Hospital, it is something that he pushed very hard, and his appointment of Mr. Richard Rocco, who is a Congressional Medal of Honor winner to the Veterans' Affairs Committee. Governor, I want to commend you.

I also wanted to just share with you some thoughts that I have, which is part of the purpose of my wanting to hold this hearing in Santa Fe, and that is that you know the concerns of veterans in our rural areas and mostly my third congressional district. I care about all of New Mexico's veterans, but whether veterans from my district are concerned about a cemetery or a health care facility or a nursing home or a VA hospital being in Albuquerque or perhaps considering expanding health care of that hospital, I want you to know.

I see people like Al Tafoya from Angel Fire here and Joe Sera from Espanola. Those veterans feel that access and financial constraints should not be a barrier for them in sharing in what they deserve as veterans.

I know you feel very strongly about this, but I mostly appreciate your wanting to help us in any way, and I know the help is there and I know your commitment is sincere because it was obvious with what you did in this last session of the legislature with a nursing home.

I have no questions except to commend you and to thank you for being here.

Governor **Anaya**. Thank you.

Mr. **Shelby**. Congressman Lujan.

Mr. **Lujan**. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I want to say thank you to the Governor, also. He has been most supportive as I knew he would.

I also want to mention another one of the State officials that has been just super on this, and that is State Commissioner Jim Baca. He is enthusiastic about it and just couldn't ask for any more better cooperation from the State of New Mexico than we have got, and I am sure those little problems of legislation and the little money, Governor, I am sure we can just slide right over those for such a worthy project.

Mr. **Shelby**. Governor, thank you for coming before us and we are going to have what I hope looks like a good hearing in your capital.

Governor **Anaya**. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. **Shelby**. Next I want to call Mr. Fred Garcia. He is representing the mayor for any remarks that he would like to make.

Mr. Garcia, if there are not objections, any written testimony that you have will be submitted to the record in its entirety. If you would, just sum up as briefly as you can your remarks.

STATEMENT OF ALFREDO GARCIA, GRANTS ADMINISTRATOR, ON BEHALF OF HON. LOUIS R. MONTANO, MAYOR, SANTA FE, NEW MEXICO

Mr. GARCIA. Good morning, Mr. Chairman and Members of the Congress.

Mayor Montano had a business trip outside the city which was committed a long time ago on the Sister Cities International and he had to be there, so he asked me to come here.

The mayor of Sante Fe wishes to submit this statement for the record.

As mayor of the city of Santa Fe, I wish to first welcome you to the city of Santa Fe and to the State of New Mexico. I am extremely sorry that I could not be here to personally address you and offer the city's commitment to you in regards to the veterans' national cemetery located in the city of Santa Fe. I have asked Mr. Alfredo Garcia, grants administrator for the city of Santa Fe, to present my statements today for the record.

I would like to direct all my remarks to the veterans' national cemetery located here in Santa Fe. This cemetery for many years has certainly been one of the show places of Santa Fe and of the national cemeteries for the Federal Government.

I would like to express my gratitude for the excellent job of maintenance and upkeep done by the veterans' national cemetery personnel here in Santa Fe.

We have been concerned lest the Federal Government withdraws from the cemetery program. It is a program that I feel sure would have a financial burden on this city and on our State. Ever since the State grant program was enacted by the Federal Government, our concern has been heightened. It is my understanding that under that program the Federal Government contributes one-half of the funds needed to establish a State cemetery; but once the cemetery is established, funding for maintenance and upkeep is the sole responsibility of the State.

I could never imagine New Mexico submitting a request for a State grant because of the national cemetery in Santa Fe. According to my information, there are only 5 or 6 States that have applied for this type of grant; and these are States where there were no national cemeteries. The financial burdens that it would place on the State of New Mexico is quite extreme, and I feel that legislation would be quite an obstacle for this type of a cemetery.

It is also my understanding that the Veterans' Administration will not purchase land for a national cemetery. However, they will accept donated land. With this understanding, it has come to my attention that the Veterans' Administration is interested in acquiring additional acreage adjoining the cemetery; and I will commit the city of Santa Fe in working toward this end. I have apprised the city council of the need to make additional acreage to the national cemetery, and our commitment to you and the Federal is hereforewith tendered.

The city will work on several alternatives for acquiring needed land for the continuation of the Santa Fe National Cemetery. One of these is to work together with the Santa Fe Estates and to diligently work on a suitable arrangement. Another alternative would be to make available other city land just across the highway from the site of where the national cemetery is now located.

Overall, I pledge to work with the Veterans' Administration of the State of New Mexico and to keep this cemetery to service this whole Southwest. I will, together with the city council, exhaust every avenue to acquire the necessary land needed for this project.

[The prepared statement of Mayor Montano appears on p. 62.]

Mr. SHELBY. Thank you, Mr. Garcia.

First of all, I want to thank you for your encouraging message on behalf of the city of Santa Fe.

We, as members of the committee, want to share your pride in the national cemetery; and I want to assure you that there is no thought being given to withdrawing from the national cemetery program. Our existing cemetery will stay in operation as long as we have a Government, and that is what we want to do is strengthen the Government. It is good to have you with us.

Mr. **Garcia**. We were concerned, Mr. Chairman, not so much that, but that it would be a full cemetery and it would be only the upkeep of it at that point. We would like for it to be available for the veterans who so proudly served their country, for a line of clarity.

Mr. **Shelby**. Thank you.

Mr. Garcia, if you will stay with us just a minute.

Mr. **Richardson**. Mr. Chairman, I think what I hear is correct from Mr. Garcia. What you are saying is that the city of Santa Fe is prepared to make available the 40 acres for the purpose of expanding the cemetery. In other words, the mayor has made this decision already and the city is now prepared to do this; is that correct?

Mr. **Garcia**. The mayor has consulted the city council on this. In fact, they hold the land in trust adjoining the cemetery with Santa Fe Estates. It is a joint ownership. They will work with Santa Fe Estates to see what arrangement can be made. If nothing is then forthcoming in that area, the mayor is willing, and so is the council, to offer land just across the highway, which is owned by the city and is held solely by the city.

Mr. **Richardson**. I think, Mr. Chairman, this is a major initiative that I want to commend the city and you and the mayor for being so forthcoming. I think this is a blockbuster announcement that we are very pleased with, and I want to personally thank you. I think every veteran in the State of New Mexico would do so, too. Thank you, Mr. Garcia.

Mr. **Garcia**. Congressman Richardson, after consulting with you and your staff in Washington, the mayor has made this determination.

Mr. **Shelby**. Congressman Lujan.

Mr. **Lujan**. That is great. That is super. If the city will do that, we can almost guarantee that the additional 47 acres, I guess——

Mr. **Garcia**. Right now, the national cemetery has 13 acres which they are going to open pretty soon, which will go to about 1996. An additional 40 acres, I understand, is required. So this is what the mayor is contemplating.

Mr. **Lujan**. I just want to tell you, I haven't lost my Santá Fe roots, so I am not talking about closing the Santa Fe Cemetery. Fred and I went to school together and so that is——

Mr. **Shelby**. Thank you, Mr. Garcia.

Mr. **Garcia**. You are welcome.

Mr. **Shelby**. Next we have Bill Huey on behalf of Senator Jeff Bingaman. Bill, welcome to the subcommittee.

Senator Bingaman is working on other things, but we want to hear any remarks that he might have. Any written testimony that you have with you will be submitted to the record in its entirety without objection. If you will, just briefly sum up anything you want to say.

STATEMENT OF WILLIAM HUEY ON BEHALF OF HON. JEFF BINGAMAN, A U.S. SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO

Mr. **Huey**. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator Bingaman has written you a letter and expressed his appreciation for the invitation to be here and the opportunity to speak on the subject.[1] We do have a brief statement, and I furnished copies of it to the staff for inclusion in the record.

Mr. **Shelby**. It will be included in the record, as I said, without objection.[2]

Mr. **Huey**. In the interest of time I am not going to read the statement. I would paraphrase, however, and say that Senator Bingaman is familiar with the alternatives that have been suggested.

I am sure he is going to be interested. As Congressman Richardson said, that is really a blockbuster announcement that the city made. It opens a lot of doors that were not previously opened, but the Senator is concerned that we take whatever action that the veterans themselves identify as being appropriate to take care of their needs.

There is also, as expressed in his statement, concern for the problems that continue to be brought to our office with respect to veterans and the handling of questions that are taken to the Veterans' Administration. One of the primary things that is brought to our office has to do with health service, and we hope that by the result of this hearing and our working together that we will be able to address some of those problems.

We are available, we are here, and we are very much concerned. It is a tribute to your colleagues that you brought this hearing to Santa Fe. We appreciate it very much.

Mr. **Shelby**. Thank you so much for being with us.

Mr. **Richardson**. Thank you.

Mr. **Huey**. Thank you, sir.

Mr. **Shelby**. Our next witness will be Mr. Castillo. He is the Assistant Director of the Veterans' Administration regional office. We also have Mr. Lujan, Superintendant of the Santa Fe National Cemetery; and we have Jim Kamicar, vice president, mortgage loan division, First National Bank of Albuquerque. I believe we have got chairs for all of you, and we can move along if you all would come on together.

Gentlemen, any written testimony that you have will be included in the record in its entirety without objection. Since we have a lot of witnesses here today, if you would, just briefly summarize your remarks.

Mr. Castillo.

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[1] See p. 64.

[2] See p. 65.

STATEMENT OF A PANEL CONSISTING OF NAHUM CASTILLO, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, ALBUQUERQUE VETERANS' ADMINISTRATION REGIONAL OFFICE, ACCOMPANIED BY ALBERT BREEN, ADJUDICATION OFFICER; OLIN WESTBROOK, LOAN GUARANTY OFFICER; JERRY MURPHY, MANAGEMENT ANALYST; AND DONALD ADAMS, DISTRICT COUNSEL; RUDOLPHO LUJAN, SUPERINTENDENT, SANTA FE NATIONAL CEMETERY; JAMES R. KAMICAR, VICE PRESIDENT, MORTGAGE LOAN DIVISION, FIRST NATIONAL BANK IN ALBUQUERQUE

Mr. CASTILLO. Mr. Chairman, on behalf of Mr. Joseph S. Cordova, Director of the VA regional office in Albuquerque and our 107 employees, I am pleased to welcome you, Congressman Richardson, Congressman Lujan and your staff to New Mexico.

We appreciate this opportunity to testify concerning the administration of veterans' benefits programs in the State of New Mexico. I am accompanied today by our adjudication officer, Mr. Albert Breen; our loan guaranty officer, Olin Westbrook; management analyst, Jerry Murphy; and district counsel, Mr. Donald Adams.

The Albuquerque Regional Office has jurisdiction for the veterans benefits programs in the entire State of New Mexico serving a veteran population of approximately 162,000, their dependents, and survivors. It ranks 44th in size, based on workloads, and processes about 1 percent of the national workload.

The regional office consists of six operating divisions, each responsible for a particular segment of services. For the sake of expediency, I will just touch lightly on each one of them and I will just dwell a little bit more on loan guaranty since that seems to be the program of interest.

We have the support services division which takes care of our finance activities and our administrative activities, such as accounting, debt collection, messenger service, communications, and so forth.

The personnel division provides services in all phases of personnel administration. The regional office employee profile reflects a strong implementation of affirmative action policy and exceeds the local makeup of the civilian work force in all categories.

The loan guaranty division processes applications, develops necessary evidence, and makes determinations regarding entitlement to home loan guaranty benefits. It also conducts appraisals to establish acceptable home values, services loans, acquires and disposes of properties, and assists eligible physically handicapped veterans to purchase specially adapted homes with the aid of the grants.

Recent economy factors have seriously affected our loan guaranty division to a certain extent. The two main causes are unemployment on one side and a decrease in home mortgage interest rates on the other. In an effort to prevent foreclosures due to loss or reductions of employment income, the loan guaranty division has interceded on behalf of veterans by asking all lenders, holders and servicers of VA-guaranteed loans in New Mexico to offer veteran borrowers an opportunity to reinstate delinquent accounts through reasonable repayment plans and other forms of forbearance. The trend toward lower interest rates which began last year greatly increased the loan processing workload. For example, while we only processed 454 loans in fiscal year 1982, which is when interest rates were quite high, fiscal year to date this year, we have processed 1,579 loans. We expect to guaranty well over 2,000 loans in the current fiscal year with the principal amount exceeding $96 million. We have been employing various measures to prevent timeliness and backlog problems in our loan processing and appraisal activities. As of July 8, we had a backlog of only 10 appraisals pending processing and date of receipt of the oldest appraisal report was June 20, 1983. In loan processing, 27 applications were pending, the oldest of which had been received by the VA only 5 days earlier. We will continue our efforts toward keeping loan guaranty workloads under control to assure the high quality and timely service that the veterans of New Mexico have come to expect.

Our vocational rehabilitation counseling division provides a full range of counselling, vocational rehabilitation, and adjustment services to eligible persons.

Our veteran services division provides current information and assistance to the veterans and their beneficiaries on all benefits programs. I might add here that presently we are averaging close to 1,600 walk-in personal interviews and an average of 8,000 telephone interviews per month. The operation of a statewide toll-free telephone network enables the public to reach us at a price of a local call. Another very unique program in the veteran services division is the guardianship program for incompetent veterans. This program has been greatly enhanced by full and cooperative working relationships with the New Mexico Veteran Service Commission. The New Mexico Veteran Service Commission is the court-appointed fiduciary for 300 VA beneficiaries out of 329 New Mexico court-established fiduciaries.

Last is our adjudication division. They are involved in timely and accurate delivery of benefits. This division processes applications, develops evidence and makes decisions on claims for veterans' benefits such as compensation, pension, education, burial allowances, and others.

As in other regional offices, we provide office space for a number of national veteran service organizations, that is, the American Legion, American Red Cross, AMVETS, DAV, Paralyzed Veterans of America, and Veterans of Foreign War.

The district or the Nation's fastest growing region, with a 32.5-percent growth in veteran population, is the mountain area of the West which includes New Mexico. Of the ten fastest growing veteran population States during 1970–80, New Mexico ranked eighth with 24.8-percent growth in veterans. It is expected that Albuquerque's population will double in New Mexico in the next 20 years.

Mr. Chairman, this completes my statement and again I wish to express my appreciation for the privilege of appearing before your subcommittee. If there are any questions, I will gladly try to answer them or obtain the answer to them from my colleagues.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Cordova appears on p. 68.]

Mr. SHELBY. Thank you. I want to hear the other two gentlemen and then we will have questions.

Mr. Lujan, your written testimony will be submitted for the record in its entirety without objection.[1] Would you just briefly sum up what you want to say.

STATEMENT OF RUDOLPHO LUJAN

Mr. **Rudolpho Lujan**. Chairman Shelby and Members of the Congress, on behalf of the Administrator of Veterans' Affairs, Harry N. Walters, and Chief of Memorial Affairs Director, Paul T. Bannai, I thank you for the opportunity to appear before the committee this morning.

I am not going to go into the State grants program because I believe Nahum and I made it quite clear that that is not feasible, so I will go into the expansion part of the cemetery instead.

The Santa Fe National Cemetery consists of 34.59 acres of which 21.46 acres are developed. The remaining 13.13 acres are being developed and should be ready for interment in late 1984. The new development will provide 7,000 grave sites that will enable the cemetery to remain open until 1997.

Some 600 veterans and dependents are buried each year at Santa Fe. No more land exists within the cemetery for future development. If land adjacent to the Santa Fe Cemetery that is suitable for cemetery purposes were offered to the Veterans' Administration as a donation, VA would be pleased to consider such a donation. The donated land must be suitable for cemetery development and contiguous or adjacent to the cemetery.

Other than the State grants program, which I don't believe we will go into, I believe that concludes my statement I will try to answer any questions you may have. And if I can't answer them, I will provide the answers for the record.

Mr. **Shelby**. Thank you, Mr. Lujan.

Next we will hear from Mr. James Kamicar, vice president, mortgage loan division, First National Bank of Albuquerque. We appreciate your appearing with us.

Mr. **Kamicar**. Thank you very much for the opportunity to be here.

Mr. **Shelby**. Your written testimony will be included in the record in its entirety. Will you just sum up briefly your statement?

Mr. **Kamicar**. Mr. Chairman, I will try to be very brief.

STATEMENT OF JAMES R. KAMICAR

Mr. **Kamicar**. Mr. Chairman, Representative Richardson, Representative Lujan.

Two basic statements: I have enjoyed the working relationship with the Veterans' Administration home loan guarantee loan program. In my opinion, over the 16 years that I have been involved with the home loan program through mortgage loans, my experience with the service, the cooperation, and the importance that has been extended to me in a business relationship with the Veterans' Administration has been outstanding.

From a personal standpoint, on two occasions I have personally used my own Veterans' Administration guarantee eligibility for purchasing a home; and once again, the service, the cooperation, and the performance of the Veterans' Administration has been excellent.

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[1] See p. 76.

I have put together a short testimony which has been handed to Steve Arias; and if there are any questions, I would be more than happy to answer them.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Kamicar appears on p. 81.]

Mr. **Shelby**. We appreciate you all coming here today.

Mr. Castillo, I note from your testimony and also have been informed by the committee staff, that overall you are in good shape on appraisals and loan applications. I have been told that the oldest loan application is only 5 days old. Now, that is remarkable.

If we had that around the country, we wouldn't have the complaints and the problems that we currently have. I know with the housing pickup that the interest rates have gone down and the economy has begun to pick up. There has been a lot of housing starts and a lot of veterans are trying to refinance their homes. The workload has increased greatly.

You are doing something right and you are to be commended for it. I want you to keep this up.

The other thing is my further understanding that we have here in the audience today two Congressional Medal of Honor winners. You know, that is unprecedented. I have never been in a place where we had two. Mr. Jerry Murphy and Mr. Richard Rocco please stand up.

Both of you gentlemen are the ultimate, the consummate in a soldier. To be from this State and to be in this room today, is a great feeling. This is a hearing regarding veterans and you are not only a veteran, you have been awarded the highest honor your country can bestow.

Mr. Richardson.

Mr. **Richardson**. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I, too, share the pride in having these two men here in the same room.

I would like to ask Mr. Lujan a question. I take it you heard the announcement of the city of Santa Fe regarding the 40 acres.

Mr. **Rudolpho Lujan**. Yes, I did.

Mr. **Richardson**. I wonder if you, as the head of the national cemetery, could react for the record on that?

Mr. **Rudolpho Lujan**. Well, the choices we had here, between the State veterans' cemetery and establishing a new national cemetery in the Albuquerque area, I believe the acquision of those 40 acres to the north of the cemetery is the best route to go.

Mr. **Richardson**. Mr. Chairman, I wanted to get the reaction of members of the administration for the VA. Perhaps Mr. Kamicar can add to this—I don't mean to expect you to represent the VA's official position—because many times during our hearings, Mr. Chairman, many of us are trying to do something on job training and Vietnam veterans and the Outreach centers. Then the VA comes in and testifies and quietly says, "Well, we support some of these programs." Then it is the Office of Management and Budget at the White House that right when we are going to get these programs going, they just sort of chop them off.

This is an example of what I am very concerned about in the implementation of H.R. 2948. The chairman is the prime sponsor of this legislation.

Mr. Kamicar, you are a banker; you are a businessman—this is a bill that I think was modest—a bill providing $8,400 to a veteran for this mortgage foreclosure assistance.

My question is two-part: First of all, what would be the impact of that bill if it passed in the State of New Mexico; and, second, what is your view of the White House and OMB's, and I understand it was Mr. Stockman who asked that the bill be chopped off, that it not pass, that it be taken out of the Congress. I wondered what you thought the significance of that was as a banker and as a veteran?

Mr. KAMICAR. Let me address your first question first. As far as the impact on the State of New Mexico, and I don't know whether you are referring to financial impact or of the benefits that would be afforded to the veteran if the bill was to pass. Personally, I am in favor of it because most veterans, like myself, have homes or have had their homes for quite a while and they built up some equity. If they are in a position where they have lost their particular livelihood through the economic recessions, or whatever, I am sure that they had equity in their homes.

I was in a similar position not too long ago in the 1974–75 recession. I had a little bit different type of source to fall back on when I was unemployed, and that was through a loan equity in my life insurance. I had a borrowing capacity in my life insurance that kept me going through the economic recession. At that particular time, I also had a VA home on which I could have probably borrowed some equity against that property; but without an income, I am not going to get approved.

So, if the bill is put together in such a fashion that the veteran can use the equity that he had in his home within a reasonable loan-to-value ratio, or something like that, and afford the dollars to him so that he could make his current monthly payments and perhaps if we restructured the obligations, then I think we would be doing a great service for that particular veteran.

From a banker's standpoint in the financial industry, the veterans' home loan guarantee program guarantees to the lender that the lender will not lose any of that principal through the veteran. If there is equity there within a reasonable range, then the Veterans' Administration and U.S. Government also could be protected in the case that that particular veteran never found himself in a position of reestablishing himself in the employment force; and if that did have to go to a foreclosure, there could be some leeway there which would also protect the Veterans' Administration from the loan guarantee losses and also the U.S. Government.

Mr. RICHARDSON. Do you agree that a bill like H.R. 2948 would greatly benefit New Mexico which in per capita income ranks 47th in the country? H.R. 2948 also makes it easier for veterans to purchase manufactured homes. Do you agree that H.R. 2948 would be a very important bill for New Mexico?

Mr. KAMICAR. I agree.

Mr. RICHARDSON. I consider H.R. 2948 a major initiative that failed, but that we will try hard to get passed in the future.

My last question is: Later in the day we will hear testimony from the Indian veterans, from Navaho and Pueblo veterans who will talk about some problems they have with the VA guaranteed loan program.What are the problems in getting veterans on the reservation involved in this program?

Mr. **KAMICAR**. I am going to look to the Veterans' Administration for some of that information. I am fairly new to the Navaho because I have been here 2 years.

I understand that it has something to do with being able to obtain feasible title to the property, and I might refer that because I am not that familiar with it.

Mr. **CASTILLO**. Congressman Richardson, I would like to have the loan guarantee officer answer that question.

Mr. **SHELBY**. Do you want to ask him the question?

Mr. **RICHARDSON**. My question is: What is the status of an Indian veteran wanting to apply for the guaranteed loan program?

Mr. **WESTBROOK**. Well, the Indian veteran is not ineligible for a loan. However, on the reservation, you have what we call a leasehold estate, and the leasehold estate. Under a leasehold estate the veteran doesn't own his land in fee simple. Therefore, a 50-year lease is required from the Navajo Nation. We can guarantee any loan on the reservations that meet VA credit standards.

Mr. **RICHARDSON**. OK. But what is the problem? Is the problem the guarantor, is it the bank that is unwilling to make the loan?

Mr. **WESTBROOK**. Yes, I would imagine the primary problem is the lender. The lender is somewhat reluctant to make loans on the reservation. In fact, we have experienced no activity from lenders regarding loan applications on the reservations in the State of New Mexico. Therefore, we haven't processed any applications.

Mr. **RICHARDSON**. So you have never had a request from a reservation?

Mr. **WESTBROOK**. Not to my knowledge.

Mr. **RICHARDSON**. During the town meetings I had on the Navajo Reservation, Indians told me they wanted to participate in this program but the problem was the lending facility. I think it is something we are going to have to deal with, it seems to me, because there are a number of Native American veterans.

As you know, the housing problem is becoming more and more serious. I think the Pueblos here in the northern part of the State are having the same problem as well.

Mr. **SHELBY**. Thank you, Mr. Richardson.

Mr. Lujan.

Mr. **LUJAN**. Thank you. I was interested, Mr. Lujan, as far as the cemetery. You know the law says adjacent or contiguous to the present cemetery. Freddie Garcia, who is speaking for the mayor, talked about you know, that we couldn't work out with the Santa Fe Estates the deal on those 47 acres right next—that the city had across the road from the cemetery. Would that be eligible as contiguous—well, not contiguous, but adjacent?

Mr. **GARCIA**. Well, I don't believe that that would be annexing; now, we would have to cross the main road there. And I don't believe we have too many cemeteries that are annexed, but——

Mr. **LUJAN**. But we do have some?

Mr. **GARCIA**. We do have some, yes, sir.

Mr. **Lujan**. So it is possible?

Mr. **Garcia**. It would be possible, yes, sir.

Mr. **Lujan**. OK. Thank you.

Mr. **Shelby**. Gentlemen, I appreciate your testimony and appearance as a panel. Thank you for being here with us today.

Our next panel—and I will call them together—will be Mr. Ron Gattas, Paralyzed Veterans of America; Mr. Leroy Vigil, Veterans of Foreign Wars; Mr. John Garcia, Vietnam Veterans of New Mexico; Mr. Les Goldman, Jewish War Veterans; and Mr. Richard Rocco, director, New Mexico State Veterans Service Commission, representing the Governor. As the Governor has already appeared, we want Mr. Rocco to come again, personally.

Gentlemen, your written testimony will be included in the hearing record in its entirety without objection. As you gentlemen know, we do have a lot of other witnesses, and, if you would, briefly summarize your testimony.

Mr. Gattas, do you want to go first?

STATEMENTS OF RON GATTAS, PARALYZED VETERANS OF AMERICA; LEROY VIGIL, VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS; JOHN GARCIA, VIETNAM VETERANS OF NEW MEXICO; LES GOLDMAN, JEWISH WAR VETERANS; AND RICHARD ROCCO, DIRECTOR, NEW MEXICO STATE VETERANS SERVICE COMMISSION, REPRESENTING THE GOVERNOR

Mr. **Gattas**. Mr. Chairman, I have already submitted a copy to all those——

Mr. **Shelby**. And that will be included in the record without objection, as I have just mentioned.

Mr. **Gattas**. It is a rather short statement, but I will go ahead and read it.

Mr. **Shelby**. Sure.

STATEMENT OF RON GATTAS

Mr. **Gattas**. In brief, the position of the Zia chapter of Paralyzed Veterans of America on the issue of burial facilities of the New Mexico veterans is as follows: We fully support efforts to expand the current national veterans cemetery in Santa Fe by acquisition of adjoining acreage which will provide burial space for eligible veterans for the foreseeable future.

We recommend and support this course in preference to any other proposals for the burial of veterans which have been made or which may be made. Zia PVA initially went on record as supporting a State veterans cemetery in Albuquerque; however, that position was taken on the basis of information which later proved to be inadequate.

Upon receipt of additional facts, we have withdrawn our support for a State veterans cemetery in Albuquerque for the following reasons. Although the Federal Government would provide financial assistance for development cost of a State cemetery, the State of New Mexico would be obligated to pay all subsequent operational costs in excess of any burial benefits to which the deceased veteran may be eligible. We understood that this would be approximately $500,000 a year.

Due to the drastic change in the financial position of the State of New Mexico, we do not believe that the State legislature could or would make such a long-term funding commitment.

Two, while being buried in a State veterans cemetery is no disgrace, PVA feels the eligible veterans have a right to the honor of burial in a national veterans cemetery.

Three, it is our opinion that expansion of the national cemetery in Santa Fe is the most cost-effective method of providing for our veterans as well as the most desirable.

In summary, we support expansion of the Santa Fe National Cemetery, and we are convinced that the vast majority of the New Mexico veterans concur with our position. If at some time a State veterans cemetery can be developed and funded in addition to the Santa Fe expansion, we will consider supporting such a proposal.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Gattas appears on p. 82.]

Mr. SHELBY. Thank you for appearing.

Mr. Leroy Vigil, Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Mr. VIGIL. Mr. Chairman, I have a prepared statement that I would like to read, as well, and then I will present, within——

Mr. SHELBY. Without objection, you go ahead and do that; just submit it. You are recognized.

STATEMENT OF LEROY VIGIL

Mr. VIGIL. Mr. Chairman, Congressman Richardson, Congressman Lujan, I am here on behalf of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Department of New Mexico, representing our department commander, Elmo J. Whitmore; and our department quartermaster/adjutant, James L. Kimery, both whom had prior commitments and could not be here today.

My name is Leroy Vigil, and I am the department service officer. I thank you for the opportunity to be here today, representing over 12,000 active VFW members from the State of New Mexico.

The VFW has conducted a random sampling of its membership and are unanimously united in favor of expanding the national cemetery in Santa Fe. We feel this expansion should take place through negotiating the acquisition either by purchase or gift of the adjoining property known as the Dempsey Estate.

In the alternate, the New Mexico Veterans of Foreign Wars would favor and support the creation of a national cemetery located in Albuquerque rather than a State cemetery. We are strongly opposed to the idea of establishing a veterans State cemetery in Albuquerque that would be funded through a partnership between the Veterans' Administration and the State of New Mexico. We feel that having to approach the New Mexico State Legislature on a yearly basis, coupled with the uncertainty of the legislative budget providing adequate funding year-in and year-out, would not serve the best interests of the New Mexico veteran and his loved ones to opt for a State-run veterans cemetery at this time.

However, we wish to note that many good or excellent ideas have been unpopular in the past, beginning with the signing of the Declaration of Independence in 1776; and as recently as the Carrie

Tingley Veterans Home in Truth or Consequences, which took years before it was finally approved.

The idea of expanding the present cemetery or the creation of an Albuquerque-based national cemetery fits into this category. We believe that New Mexico presently has enough able leaders in government at the Federal, State and local levels that can work together in conjunction with the service organizations to negotiate a trade, purchase, or other acceptable settlement that would satisfy the objection of cost that is uppermost in the minds of the Veterans' Administration at present.

Mr. Chairman, as today's spokesman for over 12,000 concerned Veterans of Foreign Wars, Department of New Mexico, and as members of your constituency, we urge your enthusiastic support for this very important, worthwhile project of great concern to our membership; that is, the expansion of the present national cemetery in Santa Fe or the creation of a new national cemetery in Albuquerque. We, in turn, offer our support and assistance when and as needed.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Vigil appears on p. 83.]

Mr. SHELBY. Thank you.

Mr. John Garcia, Vietnam Veterans of New Mexico.

STATEMENT OF JOHN GARCIA

Mr. GARCIA. Mr. Chairman, Congressman Richardson, and Congressman Lujan, I would like to take some time to thank you for coming to our State and allowing us to speak to members of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs. I speak on behalf of Vietnam veterans of our State. My statement is very brief.

The Vietnam war in aftermath has left millions of Americans with scars; 57,000 men were killed, leaving their families shattered and confused, unable to deal with the guilt they feel for having to patriotically encourage their sons and husbands to fight in a war the Government finally dismissed as a mistake; 300,000 were wounded. They and their families, too, have had a difficult time dealing with disabilities which seem to have no meaning; 850,000 veterans suffer from post-Vietnam stress disorder, according to VA figures. They and their families continue to live tortured lives, fraught with bitterness, anger and despair.

For the first time in history, America lost a war; and Americans turned their backs on returning veterans. For the dead, there were no tributes; for the living, no rewards. Never before had veterans been brought home in the dead of night, processed back to civilian life within 48 hours, and left to fend for themselves in an uncaring and sometimes hostile society.

Our veterans were attacked as "baby killers" by those who opposed the war; maligned as "losers" or "drug addicts" by those who supported it. They were targets of abuse while the war continued, and they were ignored after it was lost. Their parents, wives and children were unprepared to help them and became enmeshed in their problems without understanding what had happened.

More than 60,000 veterans have died since returning from Vietnam as a result of suicide, drug and alcohol abuse, and one-car accidents. Their families continue to suffer. Physical and emotional illnesses attributed to the trauma of the war experience which plague the veterans include depression, suicidal ideation, sleep disorders, emotional numbing, survivor's guilt, flashbacks of Vietnam, distrust of authority and government, negative self-image, problems with intimate relationships, distance from wives and children, rages and self-destruction. Their families suffer, as well.

The problems have not disappeared because we have ignored them. As a society, we have responsibilities to help out veterans and their families to come to terms with their own indifference and to work to undo the damage which has been done. Patriotism demands not only that we send our young men off to war, but that we take them back; that we grieve for the dead and accept the living.

Veterans and their families need to be cared for by the society they trusted. We owe them concern; we owe them rehabilitation; we owe them respect.

Gentlemen, according to a national survey done in 1979, there are approximately 29 million veterans in this country; 25 million served during wartime, or 37 percent. Of that, 12 million served during World War II, and 8.4 million served during the Vietnam conflict, or nearly one-third of the wartime veterans.

New Mexico has 48,000 Vietnam veterans. We were third highest in casualty rate; number one in draftee percentage per capita; 5.7 million; or 23 percent, served during the Korean conflict; and of that 5 million participants in World War I, there are only 614,000 that remain today.

This same survey also indicated 11.5 percent of the veteran population wanted to be buried in a national cemetery, nearly 16 percent were undecided, and slightly over 2 percent could not answer because they were unaware of the availability of burial in a national cemetery.

Therefore, assuming that the undecided and those unaware would eventually choose along the same line as those veterans deciding burial in a national cemetery, this is 14.1 percent, which translates to a potential of 4.1 million veterans in our country who will eventually choose burial in a national cemetery.

The Vietnam veterans, being generally the younger veterans, are more undecided about burial plans than the total group. Currently, the national cemetery in Santa Fe will reach its capacity by 1994; and at that time, the Vietnam veterans' average age will be 40 to 45.

Congressmen, I suggest that immediate action be taken to expand our national cemetery through the method offered by the city of Santa Fe to insure that all veterans will have the opportunity to be buried with dignity and respect among other comrades of past wars and conflicts.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Garcia appears on p. 85.]

Mr. **Shelby**. We appreciate your remarks. They are very meaningful to me and the other members of the panel. I think that one of the most maligned and forgotten, as you pointed out, is the Vietnam veteran.

Mr. **Garcia**. Thank you, sir.

Mr. **Shelby**. Just like you so vividly demonstrated.

Mr. Les Goldman, representing the Jewish War Veterans.

STATEMENT OF LES GOLDMAN

Mr. GOLDMAN. Mr. Congressman, Mr. Chairman, members of the subcommittee, I would like to introduce myself at the present time. My name is Les Goldman. I am a registered mortgage loan broker with offices in Albuquerque and Santa Fe.

I am a charter member and past commander, 2 years, of the Jewish War Veterans, Post 203, Rio Rancho. I was the founder and past chairman of the Service Veterans Council of Rio Rancho consisting of the Jewish War Veterans, Disabled American Veterans, AMVETS, American Legion, and Veterans of Foreign Wars, all under one roof. I am also very heavily involved in various veterans organizations in the State of New Mexico, and I just had the pleasure of being elected the vice commander of Jewish War Veterans of the southwest region.

I feel I am well qualified to make the following statement: I think at this time, not only is it important, but imperative, for you, Congressman Richardson and members of the subcommittee, to look into the matter of enlarging the present veterans cemetery in Santa Fe due to the fact that we are slowly using up the remaining lots that are available. I think that if we don't take action now, we will find ourselves in the very near future without any lots to provide our veterans who have served in many wars.

I believe that the idea of opening a cemetery in Albuquerque cannot be done at the present time, nor do I see it in the near future, especially if we have to burden the State with the maintenance of the program for the cemetery in Albuquerque. I feel that the present State legislature could in no way help with the upkeep, especially with the reduction in the budget at the present.

Mr. Chairman, Congressman Richardson and members of the subcommittee, now is the time—there is no tomorrow—for you to proceed with the acquisition of said property contiguous to the present property, the veterans cemetery here in Santa Fe.

On behalf of the Jewish War Veterans of the State of New Mexico, thank you very much for hearing me.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Goldman appears on p. 88.]

Mr. SHELBY. Our next panel member is Mr. Rocco, director, New Mexico State Veterans Service Commission.

Mr. Rocco.

STATEMENT OF RICHARD ROCCO

Mr. ROCCO. Mr. Chairman, Congressman Lujan, Congressman Richardson, I would first like to read a short statement and then, if possible, I would like to make some comments on other issues that are affecting the veterans in the State of New Mexico.

Mr. SHELBY. You may proceed, Mr. Rocco.

Mr. ROCCO. As director of the Veterans Service Commission, I have met with all the leaders of the various veterans organizations within the State. I have also met with the director of the national cemetery here in Santa Fe, Mr. Lujan, as well as with Congressman Lujan, when he came to my office and mentioned the idea of developing a State cemetery.

The consensus of the leaders of the veterans organizations is that they would like to enlarge the national cemetery and that the 40-odd acres be purchased for this project. The veterans organizations feel that if we go along with acquiring a State cemetery, it will encumber the State to finance this project from here on in.

Approximately $400,000 a year is spent by the national cemetery on the upkeep of the cemetery. This would mean that we would have to go before our State legislature and ask for approximately the same amount or thereabout to keep a State cemetery going. At a time when we are facing a very serious economic situation in the State and whereby veterans' programs are being cut, to include my agency and the fact that we are having to go to the legislature to finance the veterans' homes, this will cause a great deal of hardship for the State to provide these funds. It will jeopardize the Carrie Tingley project.

The organizations feel that getting the State legislature to appropriate money on a continued basis will be very difficult. Other alternatives that have been looked at are the acquisition of either State, Federal, or city land, as was discussed earlier.

Now, there was a couple of statements that were made earlier during this testimony that I think should be cleared up. In my conversation with David McNeal, who is the manager of the Santa Fe Estates, he stated to me that the Santa Fe Estates was asking $2 million for those 40-odd acres. I don't know how we could come up with that kind of money. The second thing is that in developing a cemetery, it will run over a million dollars.

Now, if we can get land and turn it over to the Federal Government, that will be their responsibility, their fiscal responsibility, and it will be a one-time grant; and our fiscal responsibility will end. The State cemetery will not end; it will continue.

That is briefly my statement. I would like to speak on a couple of other issues, one being the medical services to the veterans in the State of New Mexico. I have discussed this with the Governor, with Congressman Richardson, with Congressman Lujan, as well as the other legislative representatives.

Number one, the State of New Mexico is very happy to have a new veterans hospital built in the city of Albuquerque; however, the issues of access to VA medical care is not being met and will not be met unless we take some drastic measures. These measures will not encumber the Federal Government with a lot of money. What we are talking about is that the people in the southern part of the State, the people from the northern part of the State, the people that are under Congressman Richardson's district, are finding a very difficult time reaching medical treatment facilities.

In the six counties that lie in the southern part of the State veterans are having to go to Texas—to El Paso, Tex. In El Paso, Tex., they are refusing to see any veteran that is not service-connected. We are having a very difficult time in getting these veterans hospitalized because you have to have a doctor from your area call the VA in Albuquerque to find out whether it is a medical emergency and whether hospitalization is required. This has resulted in many veterans having to pay for private ambulances, private medical care.

Our own Senator recently was given a horrendous hospital bill that he thought would not be encumbered on him, but would be encumbered by the VA, due to the fact he was a two-time Purple Heart winner and had service connection disabilities; but this did not happen.

So my request to you and to the legislators of this State and of our Congress is to look at alternatives, one alternative being that we can establish a satellite clinic in the northern part of New Mexico; we can establish another satellite clinic on the grounds of the Veterans Center in Texas or Colorado that would respond to most of the needs of the veterans in those States.

The second problem that we are having in the State of New Mexico, as you well know, is a very high unemployment problem. When the jobs bill first came out and the word that I was getting from the Congressmen was that bill would pass, I went throughout the State arranging with veterans throughout the State to start working on proposals to go for Federal funding. After I promised these veterans throughout the State that we would go for that money, that we would try to develop a jobs training and employment development program in New Mexico, I find recently that the funding has been cut.

I am asking for your assistance in obtaining funding. I am asking for your assistance to give New Mexico its fair share in developing an employment and training program.

And, last but not least, I would like to commend Representative Richardson on his interests on behalf of the POW's and MIA's. This is an issue that the Vietnam veterans have been fighting for for a long time. We have not really had the support that we have needed. However, we have had the support from Bill Richardson from the very beginning; this was several years ago when he was running for Congress. He has made a commitment to the veterans of New Mexico that he will explore the situation with the POW's and MIA's, and I feel that he is working very hard in this.

That is all I have, Mr. Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Rocco appears on p. 89.]

Mr. Shelby. We appreciate all of you coming to the committee.

Mr. Richardson, do you have any questions or comments?

Mr. Richardson. First of all, I am pleased to hear your views on the Santa Fe National Cemetery.

Mr. Rocco, I share your concern that the veterans in the southern part of the State and in the northern part of the State do not receive adequate health care due to limited access to good health care facilities. I want Mr. Rocco to know that I agree that we need some kind of satellite facility in the northern part of the State for the VA.

I also would like to get your comments on establishing a Vietnam veterans outreach program. As you know, there is one in Albuquerque. I would like to see that expanded. We had a fight in keeping that program alive on our committee; and, again, Congressman Shelby was one of the deciding factors in enabling us to keep the funding for another 2 years.

I would like to expand that program because I think it is working; and I would like to have your comments on whether you concur with this.

Mr. Rocco. The way I feel about the Vietnam veterans' outreach program is this: No. one, it is fully inadequate at the present time to meet the needs of the veterans. When I started the program, we had four counselors for the entire State of New Mexico. We were finding ourselves working 12 to 14 hours a day, traveling day and night to meet with veterans and to set up rap groups and to set up veterans' support systems.

As a result, many veterans throughout the State were not touched by this program. We did concentrate in the Bernalillo County; we did see a horrendous amount of veterans. I believe between the years of 1979 to 1981, we had seen over 1,800 veterans with problems.

When the program was initiated, it was initiated to handle not only the psychiatric, the psychological aspect of the veterans, but to handle all problems regarding veterans, such as employment, education, discharge, upgrading. However, as I understand it, these counselors have gotten away from that and are strictly active in the capacity of the offering of counseling, which I agree with. I agree with Congressman Richardson that we need more counseling centers not only in Albuquerque but in the northern part of the State and in the southern part of the State.

I have talked to the Governor about this. I feel very strongly that the State can have input in this. I believe that the State can direct its mental health agencies to have within its mental health agency a program for Vietnam veterans; and I am getting some very good responses from that.

At the present time, I am working on a pilot drug and alcohol program. If this program is successful, we hope to expand this throughout the State. However, again, it deals with funding from the Federal Government and from the State. And I need your assistance in this.

Mr. Shelby. Thank you.

Congressman Lujan.

Mr. Lujan. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Richard, that 50-50 funding bill on the job training thing, that passed both the House and the Senate, and it is awaiting the President's signature. It is on a good track now.

Mr. Rocco. Congressman Lujan, can you tell me for certain approximately when the funding will be made available? This seems to be the problem with us, as far as going to the veterans and giving them the truth.

Mr. Lujan. No; I can't, because it is not law yet. And I doubt seriously, unless there is a supplemental appropriation of some kind down the line, that you would be seeing it during this fiscal year, which ends September 30. I really can't give you an answer as to when it would begin.

I visited with you about a couple of things when I was in your office. You were talking about a satellite at Carrie Tingley, which really makes a lot of sense. You have the housing——

Mr. Rocco. Facility.

Mr. Lujan. Yes; rest home there. And for that area down in that part of the State, that sure would make a lot of sense. And we talked about maybe the VAV National—owns the property over at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Maybe, you know, get some national organization support because they have been looking for things to do there that would be typically Vietnam veterans things. So I guess a followup.

The last thing, I am surprised that you young guys don't think that the Albuquerque idea is such a good time. John, you are the youngest one there. By the time you die, there is not going to be any room over here. I have been doing some calculations, and even with these additional 40 acres, we are talking about 37,000 burials, about 700 per acre—and, as I saw this, certainly the national cemetery for the Federal Government taking the whole thing, that would be preferable. We all would like to see the Federal Government come in and fund those things.

But as an alternative, as you know, there are a lot of people, particularly in the wintertime, who have a lot of problems getting up to Santa Fe for the burial. And I would assume that from a choice standpoint, one would have the choice if they wanted to come up to Santa Fe and be buried in the national cemetery. That would be one choice. But if you didn't want to, at least you had a choice for the State cemetery. So not as an alternative to expanding the Santa Fe one.

I am surprised about the $2 million figure, though. My understanding—of course, this was 2, 3 years ago—I guess we were talking about $600,000, $700,000. Now she is a little more binding at that kind of cost.

Mr. Rocco. Congressman Lujan, I don't believe that there is any veteran sitting here that would not like to have a national cemetery in Albuquerque. I think if there was some way that yourself, the other Congressmen, and Senator Domenici could get together and make a concentrated effort to bring a national cemetery to Albuquerque, I think you would have the undying support of every veteran in this State, especially the veterans in the Albuquerque-Bernalillo area.

What we are aware of is that we have had to go to the legislature for appropriations and that things are getting very tough here in the State of New Mexico. We are scared that we will not get the funding and that the program will go down the tube; that it will die in the legislature. That is our fears.

We support what you have done. I think the veterans owe you a lot as to looking out for them and looking into the possibility of getting the cemetery in Albuquerque. We commend you on this.

Mr. Lujan. Well, I would prefer it to be a national cemetery, but we all look—you know, just like saying the State can't afford it. You go to the national level and say, "Hey, we got a $2 billion deficit. We can't afford it, either." So, you know, anywhere you look, you look for money.

I really believe that if we can get the land—and I think we can, because there is a lot of commitment to that—that the cost of $200,000 a year, because it would be 50-50 on the part of the Veterans' Administration and State, that we would probably be able to prevail in the legislature of getting $200,000 to operate it.

Now, I can understand someone wanting to be buried better in a national cemetery rather than in a State cemetery; but many times, you know, somebody wants their loved ones buried near home and they would settle for a State cemetery rather than coming up over here. At least that relieves the pressure on the Santa Fe cemetery so that when a young fellow, like John, his time does come, there will be room at this one if that is what he prefers. It is just an alternative.

Mr. ROCCO. Mr. Chairman.

Mr SHELBY. Go ahead.

Mr. ROCCO. Mr. Chairman, I would like to add a little more information on the cemetery.

The leaders of the veterans' organizations met on July 13th and we selected a committee composed from all veterans' organizations to work on this issue; and the names of the members that are on this committee and that will be working with the legislatures, with the Mayor, with David McNeal from the Santa Fe Estates, and then we will be looking at all alternatives and all proposals to this problem as follows:

Mr. Les Goldman—he is on the committee; Mr. Tony Santianas, from the American Legion and, as I understand, is the chairman of that committee; Mr. John Block from the DAV, is also on the committee; Mr. Gene Gilbert, who is the chairman of the Veterans Service Commission, is on that committee. We also will be working with Mr. Peter Mcatee, who has been as well versed on this problem and has been working on this problem for a number of years; and Bob Jaramillo will also be on this committee.

These members will seek out every avenue that they can to resolve this problem, to find funding, to talk with leaders and the people that are involved in the transactions of this land. They will be meeting Mr. Baca, they will be meeting with legislatures, they will be meeting with the Governor, they will be meeting with the veterans' organizations and keeping them informed on a monthly basis until this problem is resolved.

That is all I have, sir.

Mr. SHELBY. Thank you, all of you, for appearing on this panel.

Our next panel will be—and our last one—will be Mr. Tony Santillanes, the American Legion, who was just recognized a minute ago; Mr. Robert C. Jaramillo, AMVETS; Mr. Ernie Wheaton, alternate national executive committee for the State of Mexico and Mr. Urioste of the DAV; and Mr. Joseph P. Ortiz, representing the GI Forum.

Gentlemen, welcome to the panel. We will take you all together because I think you have a common interest.

Mr. LUJAN. Mr. Chairman, let me make a comment. This is the older group now, so maybe they will be a little more supportive of the cemetery. Besides, one of them is an undertaker.

Mr. SHELBY. Gentlemen, welcome to the subcommittee hearings. Tony, do you want to start off? Let me say again at the outset, all of your written testimony, will be submitted to the record in its entirety without objection. If you will briefly sum up your testimony, it will give us an opportunity to have some questions and comments.

Tony, go ahead.

STATEMENT OF TONY SANTILLANES, THE AMERICAN LEGION; ROBERT C. JARAMILLO, AMVETS; ERNIE WHEATON, ALTERNATE NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE, STATE OF NEW MEXICO; JUAN URIOSTE, REPRESENTATIVE OF DAV; JOSEPH P. ORTIZ, STATE VICE CHAIRMAN, AMERICAN GI FORUM OF NEW MEXICO

Mr. **Santillanes**. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Representative Lujan, Representative Richardson.

I will preface my remarks by saying that the American Legion is behind a cemetery in Abuquerque. However, we had to lean toward the establishment of a State operated cemetery. But in reviewing the facts, we found some—we examined the law and found some facts that have bearing on where we stand.

According to the law, when a State operated type of center is established, then naturally the Federal Government will assist with 50 percent of the total cost in developing, starting the cemetery. Which means, if we get land donated of $100,000, the Federal Government would come in with $50,000 to help develop it; $50,000 would develop 4 or 5 acres.

As we interpret the law, the Government then would not be obligated for any more money to maintain that cemetery, and the thinking on that was that the $300 burial allowance would go to the State to help support that cemetery.

There is one big fallacy on that. The burial allowance now is not eligible to all wartime veterans. It is now only the veterans that are receiving compensation or die in a VA hospital that are entitled to the $300. So this would then mean that the veterans that are eligible for it would be able to be buried in a national cemetery, in a State operated national cemetery, and the $300 from the Federal Government will go to the State. But what happens to the veterans that are not eligible for that, would they have to then pay the $300?

The next question is: What happens to the dependents? Would they have to pay for an opening and closing and all these other costs that come with the cemetery? Now, those are the big questions in a State cemetery. Given their choice if they had to pay this money, they would probably prefer to go to some private cemetery rather than a State cemetery if they had the choice and they had to pay for it.

So one of the things that when we went into the service, there were five basic benefits: The flag that you got at the time of death, the burial allowance, the headstone, burial at a national cemetery, and the military honors, but military honors only if there were available manpower. There is not that much available manpower, so we don't get that anymore.

Now, the burial allowance has quite a few things tied into it which takes away from most of the veterans that burial allowance. Now, if this committee would back that bill to reinstate the burial allowance, I think a cemetery in Albuquerque would work fine—a State cemetery—because they would get all that money to operate it. But the way things are now, the American Legion is going on record at this time for the expansion of the national cemetery under any condition that we can, whether by trade, by buying, and donating it to the Federal Government so they could run the national cemetery where the veteran would not be encumbered or have to pay any money to be buried.

That is the statement of the American Legion. We thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Santillanes appears on p. 90.]

Mr. SHELBY. Thank you.

Mr. Jaramillo. Is that correct?

Mr. JARAMILLO. Yes.

Mr. SHELBY. Representing the AMVETS.

We are glad to have you before the panel.

STATEMENT OF ROBERT C. JARAMILLO

Mr. JARAMILLO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Congressman Lujan, Congressman Richardson.

Our organization is a very young established organization in northern New Mexico, but it is well known throughout the United States, and I, for one, am of the opinion and the belief, and on behalf of our organization, that we will go along the same line as the rest of the organizations here in New Mexico.

One thing, though—and I think that it was brought out by Mr. Rocco—pertaining to making Albuquerque, in the event it becomes a reality, make it a national rather than a State. But I think that it was well answered, and I will concur in the same beliefs. And that is about all of my statement.

Mr. SHELBY. Thank you, Mr. Jaramillo.

Mr. Wheaton, alternate national executive committee for the State of New Mexico.

STATEMENT OF ERNIE WHEATON

Mr. WHEATON. Chairman Shelby, Congressman Lujan, Congressman Richardson.

On behalf of the national organization, of course, we are of the opinion that the veterans do need the facilities, but anything I might say here would be repetitious to what our department actually has already said. So I just want to say that we appreciate the efforts that the subcommittee is doing in presenting this to all our veterans in New Mexico, and we will do everything we can to support those efforts.

Thank you very much.

Mr. SHELBY. We appreciate you appearing before the committee. I told Congressman Richardson and Congressman Lujan a few minutes ago that this was a good hearing, showing a lot of interest of the veterans organizations and the citizens of New Mexico.

Do we have someone from the DAV here?

Mr. URIOSTE. Yes, sir.

Mr. SHELBY. Yes sir, go ahead. Welcome to the committee.

STATEMENT OF JUAN URIOSTE

Mr. URIOSTE. Mr. Chairman, Congressman Lujan, Congressman Richardson.

My name is Juan Urioste, and I am the department commander with the Disabled American Veterans. I wish to thank you for the invitation to participate in today's veterans' subcommittee hearing.

Basically what I would like to state here, I submitted a statement to you for the expansion of the Santa Fe National Cemetery.

Mr. SHELBY. That statement will be included in the record in its entirety without objection.[1]

Mr. URIOSTE. Well, just briefly here, sir. The Santa Fe National Cemetery consisting of 34.59 acres is rapidly running out of room for future burials; and there are over 180,000 veterans now residing in the State of New Mexico. And because World War II veterans are 63 years of age and over, there is a growing need for expansion of the Santa Fe National Cemetery; and whereas, there are available approximately 40 acres contiguous to the existing cemetery with ingress and egress only through the cemetery.

The Disabled American Veterans, Department of New Mexico, urges Congress to take immediate action for the acquisition of said land by negotiation, either by purchase or gift; that any Federal land, Federal or State land, in excess to the needs of the Federal or State Government, be set aside for the future establishment of an annex to the Santa Fe National Cemetery.

Mr. SHELBY. We appreciate your comments.

The GI Forum.

STATEMENT OF JOSEPH P. ORTIZ

Mr. ORTIZ. Distinguished members of the Veterans' Affairs Committee and Congressman Lujan.

My name is Joseph P. Ortiz. I am here representing our State chairman, Mr. Pete Jimenz. He was unable to attend.

This past spring marked the 11 millionth GI Forum GI loan by the VA loan grant service. We sincerely believe that this housing program is successful and has benefited millions of veterans for the past 39 years. This program has benefited communities across the Nation from increased tax bases created by these loans; and much employment has been created by the construction of these homes.

The American GI Forum is supportive of the loan guarantee service as is. Gentlemen, the admissions, and the priorities for administration, at the Veterans' Administration Medical Center is based on availability of beds at the medical center. Veterans discharged with non-service-connected disabilities and those 65 years or older will be denied admission to VA hospitals. Those 65 years or older will suffer the most. There is a critical shortage of space, of beds nationally.

We urge this committee to resolve to find ways to alleviate this serious problem. We estimate approximately 6,000 World War II veterans are now 65 years of age in New Mexico alone.

Mr. Jimenz, our State chairman, has met with Mayor Louie Montano of Santa Fe and has advised the executive board of the American GI Forum that the city of Santa Fe is committed to provide acreage for burial purposes to the Veterans' Administration. We submit to you our request that retention of the national cemetery be kept in the city of Santa Fe. There is not one State in the United States that now has two national cemeteries.

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[1] See p. 102.

We were glad to hear that the mayor was offering this land and we were very supportive in this area.

The other thing that I was asked by Mr. Jimenz to emphasize was that the housing loan program be kept in its entirety. I am a veteran myself and I know that if it were not for the GI loan, I wouldn't have the house that I have now because I did run into some problems in the 1970's. In 1976, I was unemployed and it was through the VA loan that I was able to keep my house and continue to pay on it.

Thank you, gentlemen.

Mr. SHELBY. We appreciate all of you appearing.

Congressman Richardson, do you have any comments?

Mr. RICHARDSON. Just a word of appreciation to all the witnesses. I assume Congressman Lujan was passing onto us that one of the witnesses here was an undertaker. I found out who that was because of his specific knowledge of several burial aspects. It must be Tony Santillanes.

Mr. SANTILLANES. Right.

Mr. RICHARDSON. I know you are thinking ahead, Tony.

Mr. SANTIANAS. I have one comment to make. I made the statement of $300. The plot allowance is $150. I made a mistake on that.

But we also are overlooking one thing in the expansion of the cemetery. All of us in the credit organizations look only at wartime veterans; but to be buried in a national cemetery, all you have to have been is an ex-serviceman; get an honorable discharge and it doesn't matter whether you served during peacetime or wartime, you are entitled to a national cemetery. All these figures that we have sometimes don't include some of these others that are eligible.

Mr. SHELBY. Thank you.

Congressman Lujan, do you have any comments?

Mr. LUJAN. Yes. You know certainly the priority is to expand the Santa Fe National Cemetery. I don't think there is any question on anybody's part.

The reason, as we had talked about before, about pursuing a State cemetery is—I am not sure whether the Veterans' Administration would accept even a donation of the land to start a national cemetery in Albuquerque.

What Harry Walters has told me by letter and Paul Benair in meetings with him is that—and here is how it reads: "It is VA policy to acquire land for cemetery expansion through donations by State, local government, corporations or groups or whatever." So now he is talking about accepting a donation just for expansion, but if they would accept the donation to make a national cemetery out of Albuquerque, that would even be better.

So tomorrow, as I said in my opening statement, I am going to have a meeting to try to identify the land. And let me tell you, Tony, that I would like for the committee to be there if you fellows could. Let me look at my schedule here and when and where that meeting is going to be so that all the members of the committee can be there. It is at 11:30, currently in my office in the Federal Building, 1001, the Dennis Chavez Building in Albuquerque.

It can serve the purpose of just identifying which is the most logical one, you know, which would be the best one to acquire, and at least if we identified that, then I can go back and say, "Well, will you accept that as a national cemetery," and I hope that they do, but we would have to see about that.

Mr. SANTILLANES. I will be there.

Mr. LUJAN. And the other members of the committee?

Mr. SANTIANAS. I will contact all the members.

Mr. SHELBY. You gentlemen on the panel, I appreciate, on behalf of the subcommittee, and I know that my colleagues from New Mexico also appreciate your insight. I wish you well in the future. Thank you.

Mr. SANTIANAS. Thank you very much for having us.

Mr. SHELBY. Our next panel will be Mr. Raymond Jim representing the Navajo Nations; Mr. Anthony Betoney, Mr. Sandoval, and Mr. Al Tafoya. Would you gentlemen come down and join us?

Welcome to the subcommittee hearings. I note that you have two advocates up there, the gentleman on my left, and the gentleman on my right, in Washington, D.C., and I am glad to be sitting here with them in your capital city of Santa Fe, N. Mex., today.

As I have said earlier, your written testimony will be submitted to the record without objection in its entirety, and if you would briefly sum up your comments so we might have a chance for comments from the panel.

STATEMENTS OF RAYMOND JIM AND SAMUEL SANDOVAL, FOUR CORNERS NAVAJO VETERANS, INC., NELSON BETONEY, DEPUTY DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF NAVAJO VETERANS AFFAIRS, WINDOW ROCK, NAVAJO NATION, ARIZONA, AND AL TAFOYA

Mr. JIM. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee.

My name is Raymond Jim, I serve as the service officer representing the Navajo Nation of Shiprock Agency, which is located in the Four Corners Region in New Mexico.

I would like to express my appreciation to your committee for this opportunity to discuss our statements. At my left is Sam Sandoval with the Four Corners Navajo Veterans, Inc. Sam Sandoval is going to make this presentation.

Mr. SHELBY. You go ahead.

Mr. SANDOVAL. Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee, on behalf of the 12,000 to 15,000 Navajo Nation veterans, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to present to you our proposition and views regarding a request for matching funds for establishing a Navajo Nation Veterans' Cemetery. Under the provision of 38 U.S.C. 1008, Public Law 95-476 of 1978—guidelines on how to obtain funding.

As you know, Mr. Chairman, the Navajo Nation Veterans' Affairs do not have a nationally recognized veterans' cemetery for burial of their deceased veterans and their families. At this time, the Navajo Nation is planning and wants to obtain matching funds from this respective State to establish a national cemetery and alleviate the full burden of the cost for the interment of deceased Navajo service men, veterans, spouses, and surviving dependents.

The Navajo Nation's plan intends to select a site within this respective district or a centralized location for interment of their deceased veterans. The Navajo Nation is in itself a distinct government with its own governing body and its own administrative and judicial procedures. The U.S. Government is a guardian over the Navajo Tribe.

When Ronald Reagan was running for office and after he was elected to the Presidency of the United States, he reaffirmed the promise that he would work with the Indians on a government-to-government basis. This subcommittee should be aware of the fact that in 1982, Harry Walters, Administrator of the Veterans' Administration, requested and approved $1.6 million for the Republic of Guam for a national veterans' cemetery. It should be noted and understood that Guam is not a State within the meaning of the U.S. Constitution nor is it a recognized tribe. If the Honorable Harry Walters can approve a large sum of money in the interest of Guam, he should not find much to disapprove since this distinct government is within the territorial jurisdiction of the United States and is also within the jurisdiction of three States, New Mexico, Arizona, and Utah.

It should also be noted that the Navajo Tribe has their own tradition and their own cultures. It should be recognized and understood why the Navajo Tribe wants to bury their deceased within their home reservation.

The Navajo Reservation is trying to avoid burying their deceased veterans in foreign cemeteries. The Navajo Tribe has to pay for private plots and so forth.

If this subcommittee approves a request for matching funds pursuant to 38 U.S.C., 1008, we will abide by the State guidelines. A geological survey will be done by the Bureau of Indian Affairs for a spot to be chosen.

For this subcommittee's information, a survey was made by the office of the Navajo Veterans' Office to see how many veterans will be served; and here are the statistics: 12,876 veterans, 2,996 widows, 1,212 dependents. So you have the total of 17,084.

If this State cannot recognize the Navajo Tribe as a distinct government, the Senate and the House subcommittee will consider a bill for modifying 38 U.S.C. 1008 for the benefit of the Navajo Nation.

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to express our concern I have some letters attached to my statement I would like to make part of the hearing record.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Jim appears on p. 92.]

Mr. SHELBY. If you will just submit those letters, I will include those in the record in their entirety. Not only will the members of the panel here today have them, but the full Veterans' Affairs Committee will be given a copy of your testimony and the letters.

Mr. SANDOVAL. Thank you.

Mr. SHELBY. Does anybody else from the panel want to make any comments?

STATEMENT OF NELSON BETONEY

Mr. BETONEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Congressman Lujan and Congressman Richardson.

My name is Nelson Betoney. I am the Director of the Navajo Office of Veterans' Affairs in Window Rock, Navajo Nation.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, I appreciate this opportunity to represent the Navajo veterans' Commission, Navajo Nation, regarding the housing needs of the 12,876 Navajo veterans, about 2,096 widows, and 1,212 children of deceased Navajo veterans who reside on the Navajo Reservations.

For the record, Navajo Veterans have compiled an extraordinary record of military service on behalf of the United States. Presidents from Calvin Coolidge to Ronald Reagan have expressly commended the Navajo people for their bravery, courage, and personal sacrifice.

Recently the U.S. Government demonstrated a new willingness to express the Nation's indebtedness to the Navajo Nation for contributions of its veterans.

On July 28, 1982, President Reagan signed House Joint Resolution 444 into law as Public Law 97-225 designating August 14 of each year as Navajo Code Talkers Day. Despite public acknowledgements such as this, Navajo veterans have never been able to gain treatment and benefits from the Federal Government on a parity with other non-Indian veterans, and, in many cases, have been totally excluded from key benefits and programs instituted expressly for veterans.

Foremost among these are various housing benefits, including home loans.

Responding to the special housing needs of Navajo veterans is particularly important because of the grave unemployment and acute hardship which persists within the Navajo Nation. Such a situation is particularly ironic since the Navajo people have contributed so significantly to the military security of the United States. However, this is both the Federal Government's and the tribe's responsibility.

The U.S. Government has taken no positive action to insure that Navajo veterans have a realistic opportunity to participate in housing assistance programs which are made available through the Veterans' Administration.

Some Navajo veterans have enjoyed full-time and steady employment. They should be eligible for privately financed home construction and purchase loans. Yet the Veterans' Administration home loan guarantee program is not available on the reservation because of the unwillingness of banks and lending institutions to extend such credit even with a Veterans' Administration loan guarantee.

The Navajo Veterans' Commission is attempting to persuade the Veterans' Administration of the need to establish a regional office on the Navajo Reservation. If such an office existed it would be able to overcome the reluctance of banks to extend credit to Navajo veterans as well as to provide an example that nonveterans who are good credit risks can and will repay such loans.

We propose that the Veterans' Administration meet these categories of need by designating the entire Navajo Reservation equally with States through an appropriate policy interpretation or through a legislative amendment to title 38, U.S.C.

Third, we would like to emphasize that the need is urgent and Congress should act to adjust these needs.

If the Veterans' Administration would provide Indian veterans with housing guarantees, it would stand a good chance of making private financing available for Navajo veterans who could afford it.

The authority for the 100-percent guarantee would obviously be more attractive to private lenders than the limited guarantee now available through the Veterans' Administration.

This would require a cooperative effort with the Federal agencies having financing jurisdictions over Indian tribes.

There should be no reason to force Navajo veterans into a limited guarantee authority pursuant to the Veterans' Administration limited guarantee policy.

Further, we would propose that this act of Congress could be the delivery system so urgently needed to provide housing benefits and home loans for Navajo veterans.

This system could be designed in connection with the Indian Housing Act of 1982, now at the stage of a legislative process for the benefit of all Indian tribes.

The passage of the Indian Housing Act of 1982 should not exclude Indian veterans from being eligible for any federally assisted housing programs.

I would like to point out that sufficient funds should be earmarked in loan guarantee funds, which would make it possible for the Veterans' Administration or the BIA to guarantee loans for Indian veterans because in the past allocations have not been enough to meet the total needs for privately financed homes on all reservations.

Again, we would mention the fact that the existence of a 100-percent loan guarantee on a cooperative basis with the BIA may succeed in breaking down the reluctance of private lenders to make loans on reservations.

I would like to submit for inclusion in the record the attached description of the Navajo Veterans' Commission overall housing program.

Mr. **Shelby**. Without objection, that will be submitted to the record. You just give it to the court reporter or the clerk and it will be included.[1]

Mr. **Shelby**. In addition, as I said earlier, we will share this with all the members of the subcommittee who are not here at the hearing and the members of the whole Committee on Veterans' Affairs. I think that would be something you would want.

Mr. **Betoney**. I would like to commend members and staff on the committee and your counterparts in the House of Representatives for your interest in the hearing on the veterans' housing situation on the Navajo Reservation.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to present my testimony on behalf of the Navajo Veterans' Commission I would be pleased to work with you for the purpose of helping Indian veterans toward the goal of decent housing.

Mr. **Shelby**. Thank you.

Yes, sir. Do you have a comment?

Mr. **Tafoya**. Mr. Chairman, I am not part of the panel here. If you have any questions specifically——

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[1] Retained in committee files.

Mr. **Shelby**. It is OK. You go ahead. I know you have a common interest.

STATEMENT OF ALFRED TAFOYA

Mr. **Tafoya**. My name is Alfred Tafoya from the northern part of New Mexico. I have been involved in various veterans' organizations in trying to get them organized.

I am here mostly on a question directed to trying to get the panel to understand the feelings and the principles involved in the veterans' affairs.

One of the questions that Mr. Manuel Lujan was trying to address a while ago was that as far as the cemetery is concerned, it would be good to have an alternative method. This country owes the veteran a great debt and it cannot be measured in terms of dollars and I don't believe that it can be measured in terms of a budget. We have given a low priority in budgets and dollars.

Having served this country we all deserve to be buried in a national cemetery regardless of what it takes to enlarge a national cemetery or how much money it costs.

Our Government has the responsibility at times to send American young men to fight wars to defend our principle, to defend our land, and to defend our people; so we get them killed and we need to have a place to bury them.

We also have a lot of veterans with a lot of mental problems; they end up getting killed when they come back, and we need to find a place to bury them.

What seems to be the administrative policy, or Mr. Reagan's, and at times I feel even the whole Congress feelings, is that we are all budgetary items. We all have to fit in the budget and we are unwilling to trade one MX missile for one 40-acre plot of burial ground for our veterans.

I believe that a national cemetery, regardless of the cost, in every State, needs to be a matter of priority.

I also believe that in terms of our mortgage assistance program, again, everything that seems to be done as far as the budget is concerned is always in terms of dollars.

We are missing the point and we are missing the principle that you are talking about men; you are talking men with feelings and men with families. They have suffered more than any individual that has not served his country.

We have a President that is not a combat veteran and we have a Congress that is not majority-oriented as combat veterans. They are not as sensitive to veterans as they should be.

I am very upset with the fact that we are put on a budget and yet we are continuing to build the military, supposedly, and forgetting the conventional forces. We are building our nuclear arms and our nuclear establishment, that push-button type war, and it is something that the Government is doing.

As far as taking care of the troops that are actually going to have to end up going in and doing the dirty part, the ones that are actually going to have to sit there and watch everybody die and the ones that are actually going to have to sit there and bleed, we are not worried about whether they get pay raises or sufficient pay raises or their housing is adequate.

We are providing for them on an educational, on a housing, and even on burial basis without being part of the budget. I am just totally upset with the concept that we are forgetting the principles that there are people involved.

We are not talking about numbers, we are talking about people. It is something that the Nation owes and we cannot put it in terms of dollars.

That is how I think a lot of our veterans feel. We are just being put off to the side. They can send us wherever they want when they want us; and we can do whatever the Government feels is necessary in the defense of democracy, but yet at the end in terms of human rights and human necessity, we seem to forget.

That's all the comments I have to make.

Mr. **Shelby**. OK. Mr. Jim, do you have any comments?

Mr. **Jim**. No comments.

Mr. **Shelby**. Mr. Richardson, do you have any comments?

Mr. **Richardson**. I would just like to thank the witnesses.

Is this the first appearance that representatives of the Navajo Nation have made before a committee of Congress, before the Veterans' Affairs Committee, to your knowledge?

Mr. **Jim**. To my knowledge, this the first appearance of the Navajo Nation at any one time.

Mr. **Richardson**. The reason I asked is this: During the July town meetings I held, there was a representative from the Navajo Nation who talked about the VA home loan guarantee program, mortgage foreclosure, and the issue of the cemetery. I think that concerning Native Americans around this country, around the State, we don't know exactly what we are doing.

The fact that you have stated for this committee the need for a cemetery on the reservation and the need for being included in the housing program, is very important.

I also would like to acknowledge the presence here of Sam Arecheto, who is the head of the Indian Affairs Division in the State of New Mexico.

Sam, would you stand up?

Mr. Chairman, there are a number of Hispanic and Indian veterans in my district and I am always trying to make sure that they are not forgotten.

I think, if anything, what this hearing has done is to alert leaders like you in this area to some of the problems that we have.

In my district in New Mexico we have 96,000 Native Americans. Some of the problems that you have mentioned have been news to me and I promise you, as your representative, that I will work hard to make certain all veterans receive the benefits they deserve.

I would also like to say that I know Congressman Lujan has been very active with the Navajo Code Talkers legislation which was passed.

Mr. Chairman, Al Tafoya is a man whom I have known for many years and I felt that it was important for members of this committee and for the audience to hear the eloquence with which he speaks. It comes from the heart. After coming back from Vietnam, he has returned to northern New Mexico to organize the northern New Mexico Vietnam Veterans.

He was very active in the DAV Vietnam Veterans National Memorial in Eagle Nest, N. Mex. He has led many marches. He is not the kind of guy that just sits back and makes a statement like that and then at the next public forum he makes it again. In between, he is working and he is yelling, he is screaming on behalf of those who have been left behind. This is why I wanted him to be here.

He also may not be the best looking man in northern New Mexico, but he is a very fine member of the Democratic Party.

Mr. SHELBY. Mr. Richardson, I appreciate your remarks.

Congressman Lujan, do you have some comments?

Mr. LUJAN. Yes, just one. One thing that keeps bothering me. We beat the cemetery thing to death now and we don't know where we stand on that.

The mortgage thing, as far as reservations are concerned, is something that is a difficult thing.

As Mr. Garcia said a little while ago, the VA will go ahead with the 50-year lease arrangement or something like that from the tribe, but still we have trouble. The banks don't want to lend the money. Perhaps because what is the resale value of the property if you don't have the ownership of the property.

I wonder if perhaps a 100-year lease or something like that. We have other kinds of legislation where there are 100-year leases by many of the Pueblos. I don't know if the Navajo can do that, but to private business and things like that, we authorized 100-year leases so that they could get financing.

You might, and all of us, pursue that angle of it and see if maybe with a 100-year lease rather than a 50, the banks might be more willing to lend before that's the nut that we have to crack, that the banks will lend the money.

I would imagine that the tribe would agree to a 100-year lease. It has agreed in other things.

I remember the various private enterprise things for within reservations and they have agreed to that. Maybe that would be one thing.

Mr. SHELBY. Thank you, all of you, for appearing on the panel here.

Mr. ROCCO. Mr. Chairman, I would like to make an additional comment and also introduce one of our veterans commissioners who is in the audience.

Mr. SHELBY. And his name is?

Mr. ROCCO. Mr. Willis Peterson.

Mr. SHELBY. Mr. Peterson, stand up.

Mr. BETONEY. And also, in addition, we have an official member of the Navajo Code Talkers present, Mr. Sam Sandoval, here on my left.

Mr. SHELBY. We enjoyed it. Thank you.

All of the witnesses who have not left their names and addresses with the subcommittee staff, please do so in order that we may send you a printed copy of the hearing record we have established here today.

I know many of you will be contacting Congressmen Richardson and Lujan for the proceedings, and we want to furnish it to you because, as both of the Congressmen said, "We're in resolving some of the problems that you have articulated here today."

Thank you for appearing here.

We are going to have one last witness, Mr. Donny Block with the DAV.

Mr. Block, we welcome you to the panel for any comments that you want to make and, if you have any written testimony, we will submit it for the record.

If you want to send us some written testimony, we will leave the record open for a reasonable time to do that. You may now proceed with any comments you would like to make on behalf of the DAV and the veterans of New Mexico.

STATEMENT OF DONNY BLOCK, REPRESENTING DAV AND NEW MEXICO VETERANS

Mr. Block. Thank you, Chairman Shelby.

I have been involved in the veterans' affairs since World War II, with the exception of 2 years during the Korean conflict.

I think that the pulse of New Mexico—I have had my hand on it for quite sometime—since the administration of Carter, the veteran population of New Mexico has been very concerned. Many of the things that Al Tafoya told you I had in mind to tell you. It seems the veterans' population is being forgotten and to some point ignored.

The committees that are being formed by the administration to see how we can cut funds, it always seems the people that need it the most are the ones that are being cut, the veterans among them; even to the point of a recommendation to do away with the Veterans' Administration, and that's a shame.

Whoever made that kind of a recommendation, they should have their heads examined.

We are also concerned with the deterioration of the rights and its benefits that the veteran population has been having; the rights of the loosing; the letters that they receive without any explanation that they are being cut 15 percent or 20 percent or 25 percent; and that takes 3 or 4 or 5 months to find out why. I think that's a shame.

I believe that the Congress, the President of the United States, should have a little more feeling.

There also seems to be a situation where I feel that we are on welfare, that the little money we receive—I'm from the northern part of the State, a very poor area, where people are barely existing. Even if they have VA benefits and social security benefits, it is a very minimal amount. They have never been able to build up estates. They have never been able to build up anything for themselves.

All they have been is working men in the mines. They have been working men on their farms and, yes, they did more than their fair share when we had World War II, the Korean conflict, and the Vietnam war, and I call it a war because it was a war.

I appeared in February before the Joint Committee of the Veterans' Affairs; we were treated royally and, to a man, I think everybody there was on our side. However, the committee itself is not the ultimate people that will make the decision and I implore and I ask you people to be our spokesmen up there because we need your help.

I would like to take you to some places in New Mexico like Fort Bayrd Hospital. There we have a lot of the World War I veterans existing; some of them can't move around; some of them can't walk. They are there because they have no place else to go.

I wish you would visit some of the nursing homes that we have in New Mexico. A lot of our old people are there. A lot of our people are farmed out to other States because, until this year, we had no place to put them.

I think it is a great concern. I don't think, like Mr. Tafoya said a while ago, it is not a matter of dollars and cents. It is the situation of individuals; individuals who gave their heart, their time, their health, to fight for all the people of the United States, not just for us, for our families.

I don't think there should be any budget cutting in veterans' affairs. I think you should just look around and see what has happened to our veterans, the disabled veterans, particularly.

New Mexico has been good to the United States and to its people. Just look around and see the POW's. Just look around you here today and see the people that are Congressional Medal of Honor winners. That's something, something that not every State in the Union has per capita.

When you go back to Washington, I ask you to preach our gospel and help us.

Thank you very much.

Mr. SHELBY. Thank you for your comments.

We appreciate all of you coming out today on behalf of the subcommittee.

Congressman Richardson had asked us to have this hearing. I was glad to come to his home town.

Congressman Lujan, as I told you earlier, is a colleague of mine. He was in the Congress before I came.

I was there a little before Congressman Richardson. We are all glad to participate in this field hearing in New Mexico. I commend all witnesses for their very fine statements.

What we have learned today will help us in deciding our priorities on legislation that will affect all of you veterans, not only in New Mexico but in the entire United States.

This will conclude our hearing today. If any of you have additional comments, I hope you will write us or write Congressman Richardson or Congressman Lujan.

Thank you.

[Whereupon, at 12 noon, the subcommittee was adjourned.]

APPENDIX

OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN SHELBY

THE SUBCOMMITTEE WILL COME TO ORDER.

WE ARE MEETING TODAY IN THE P.E.R.A. BUILDING FOR THE PURPOSE OF CONDUCTING AN OVERSIGHT HEARING ON THE NEED FOR EXPANDING THE NATIONAL VETERANS' CEMETERY AND/OR THE NEED FOR A STATE VETERANS' CEMETERY. ADDITIONALLY, THE SUBCOMMITTEE IS INTERESTED IN HOW THE VA GUARANTEED HOME LOAN PROGRAM IS WORKING IN NEW MEXICO.

THIS HEARING WAS SPECIFICALLY REQUESTED BY THE VERY ABLE AND IMPORTANT MEMBER OF THE VETERANS' AFFAIRS COMMITTEE, THE HONORABLE BILL RICHARDSON, YOUR REPRESENTATIVE OF THE 3RD CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT OF NEW MEXICO. BILL HAS BEEN VERY ACTIVE IN THE COMMITTEE'S LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM AND HAS ALSO MADE GREAT CONTRIBUTIONS WITH HIS ASSISTANCE IN OUR OVERSIGHT RESPONSIBILITIES.

WE ARE ALSO PRIVILEGED TO HAVE WITH US THIS MORNING, THE DISTINGUISHED MEMBER WHO REPRESENTS THE 1ST CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT, THE HONORABLE MANUAL LUJAN, WHO ALTHOUGH NOT A MEMBER OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE, HAS KINDLY OFFERED TO JOIN US.

FIRST, LET ME SAY THAT I AM GLAD TO BE HERE THIS MORNING. SANTA FE IS A VERY BEAUTIFUL CITY.

I ALSO WANT TO MENTION THE VIETNAM VETERANS NATIONAL MEMORIAL AT ANGEL FIRE WHICH WAS RECENTLY DEDICATED ON MAY 30. I WATCHED NATIONAL COVERAGE OF THE DEDICATION AND MUST SAY THAT THE MONUMENT IS MOST IMPRESSIVE AND A VERY FITTING TRIBUTE TO OUR VIETNAM VETERANS.

THE VA NATIONAL CEMETERY SYSTEM CONSISTS OF 108 OPERATING NATIONAL CEMETERIES LOCATED IN 40 STATES AND PUERTO RICO. CURRENTLY, ONLY 55 ARE OPEN TO NEW INTERMENTS. OUT OF THESE, IT IS ESTIMATED THAT ONLY 43 WILL BE ABLE TO MEET VETERANS' BURIAL NEEDS BEYOND THE YEAR 2000.

THE COMMITTEE IS PLEASED THAT OVERALL THE VA HAS BEEN ABLE TO ACHIEVE ITS OBJECTIVE OF PROVIDING ONE LARGE NATIONAL CEMETERY FOR EACH OF THE TEN STANDARD FEDERAL REGIONS SINCE IT TOOK OVER THE OPERATION OF THE NATIONAL CEMETERY SYSTEM IN 1974, BUT THE NATIONAL CEMETERY SYSTEM AS IT EXISTS TODAY CANNOT POSSIBLY MEET THE EXPANDING BURIAL NEEDS FOR OUR VETERANS AND THEIR DEPENDENTS.

AS WE ARE ALL AWARE, THIS COUNTRY HAS A RAPIDLY AGING VETERAN POPULATION. THE AVERAGE AGE OF A WORLD WAR I VETERAN IS APPROXIMATELY 85 AND OUR 12 MILLION WORLD WAR II VETERANS ARE APPROACHING THE AGE OF 65. SOMETHING MUST BE DONE TO INSURE THAT WE WILL BE ABLE TO MEET THE BURIAL NEEDS OF THE HEROIC MEN AND WOMEN WHO UNSELFISHLY SERVED THEIR COUNTRY.

THE SUBCOMMITTEE IS ALSO INTERESTED IN LOOKING AT THE VA GUARANTEED HOME LOAN PROGRAM, EXISTING WORKLOADS AND THE QUALITY OF SERVICE RENDERED BY THE VETERANS ADMINISTRATION REGIONAL OFFICE IN NEW MEXICO.

SINCE ITS INCEPTION, THE VA HOME LOAN GUARANTY PROGRAM HAS BEEN ESSENTIAL TO PRIVATE LENDERS AND HAS EXTENDED HOUSING CREDIT ASSISTANCE OF MORE THAN $204 BILLION TO 11 MILLION VETERANS TO PURCHASE OR CONSTRUCT HOMES.

NEEDLESS TO SAY, THIS IS A SUCCESSFUL PROGRAM. SO SUCCESSFUL, AS A MATTER OF FACT, THAT IN A RECENT STUDY CONDUCTED BY OUR COMMITTEE, IT WAS SHOWN THAT THE VA IS HARD PRESSED TO KEEP UP WITH THE HEAVY VOLUME OF LOAN APPLICATIONS AND TO PROCESS THEM ON A TIMELY BASIS.

ON THE OTHER END OF THE SCALE, HOWEVER, FORECLOSURES ON DELINQUENT PROPERTY ARE ALSO AT AN ALL-TIME HIGH DUE TO RAMPANT UNEMPLOYMENT. IT IS ESTIMATED THAT OVER 800,000 VETERANS ARE CURRENTLY OUT OF WORK.

IT IS THE COMMITTEE'S BELIEF THAT SOME FORM OF MORTGAGE FORECLOSURE RELIEF SHOULD BE PROVIDED TO ASSIST OUR VETERANS TO KEEP THEIR HOMES DURING THIS INTERIM PERIOD OF ECONOMIC ADVERSITY. H.R. 2849, A BILL WHICH I INTRODUCED AND WHICH MR. RICHARDSON CO-SPONSORED, WOULD PROVIDE FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE UP TO $8400 AT THE ADMINISTRATOR'S DISCRETION TO VETERANS WHO, THROUGH NO FAULT OF THEIR OWN, HAVE FALLEN BEHIND IN THEIR MORTGAGE PAYMENTS AS A RESULT OF UNEMPLOYMENT OR UNDEREMPLOYMENT.

THIS PROGRAM WOULD ENABLE A VETERAN TO KEEP HIS HOME AND WOULD SAVE THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT MONEY BY ELIMINATING MUCH OF THE HIGH COST NOW INCURRED BY THE VA IN PAYING CLAIMS OF LENDERS, INSTITUTING FORECLOSURE PROCEDURES AND RESELLING ACQUIRED PROPERTIES.

H.R. 2948 PASSED THE HOUSE LAST MAY BY A WIDE MARGIN AND I UNDERSTAND THAT THE SENATE WILL BE CONSIDERING A SIMILAR PROPOSAL.

THIS HEARING IN SANTA FE MARKS THE FIRST OF WHAT I HOPE WILL BE A SERIES OF HEARINGS IN THE FIELD. IT IS IMPORTANT TO GET AWAY FROM WASHINGTON EVERY NOW AND THEN TO GET A LOCAL VIEW ON HOW OUR PROGRAMS ARE WORKING AS WELL AS INPUT ON HOW TO IMPROVE THEM.

I WOULD ASK THAT ALL WITNESSES LIMIT THEIR ORAL REMARKS TO 5 MINUTES SO THAT WE MAY HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO ASK YOU QUESTIONS. I WISH TO ASSURE YOU THAT THE ENTIRE TEXT OF YOUR PRINTED STATEMENT WILL BE MADE A PART OF THE HEARING RECORD AND THEREFORE AVAILABLE TO ALL OF THE MEMBERS OF THE FULL COMMITTEE.

OPENING STATEMENT
OF
CONGRESSMAN BILL RICHARDSON
HOUSE VETERANS AFFAIRS SUBCOMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND MEMORIAL AFFAIRS
HEARING ON THE SANTA FE NATIONAL CEMETERY AND THE VETERANS ADMINISTRATION GUARANTEED HOME LOAN PROGRAM

MR. CHAIRMAN, CONGRESSMAN LUJAN, VETERANS OF NEW MEXICO, I WANT TO WELCOME YOU ALL TO THIS HEARING OF THE HOUSE VETERANS AFFAIRS SUBCOMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND MEMORIAL AFFAIRS. I AM DELIGHTED THAT EVERYONE COULD MAKE IT HERE SO EARLY THIS MORNING.

MR. CHAIRMAN, I WANT TO EXPRESS MY DEEP AND SINCERE GRATITUDE TO YOU FOR AGREEING TO HOLD THIS IMPORTANT HEARING TODAY IN THE THIRD CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT OF NEW MEXICO. YOUR OUTSTANDING LEADERSHIP ON VETERANS HOUSING ISSUES, MEMORIAL ISSUES, AND EVERY OTHER ISSUE AFFECTING THE VETERANS OF NEW MEXICO AND THROUGHOUT THE NATION HAS BEEN AN INSPIRATION TO ME AND ALL THOSE CONCERNED ABOUT OUR NATION'S VETERANS.

THE SANTA FE NATIONAL CEMETERY IS RUNNING OUT OF ROOM. IT IS PROJECTED THAT GIVEN THE CURRENT RATE OF BURIALS, THE CEMETERY WILL REMAIN OPEN ONLY UNTIL 1997. ALTHOUGH THAT IS 14 YEARS AWAY, BUT WE MUST BEGIN EXPLORING ALL OF THE ALTERNATIVES NOW. THAT IS WHY THE SUBCOMMITTEE HAS COME TO SANTA FE. WE WANT TO KNOW WHAT VETERANS ADMINISTRATION OFFICIALS, STATE VETERANS OFFICIALS, VETERANS ORGANIZATIONS, SANTA FE AND NEW MEXICAN STATE GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS THINK ABOUT THIS PROBLEM. WE WANT TO KNOW HOW YOU WOULD LIKE TO PROCEED ON THIS MATTER.

IT IS MY UNDERSTANDING THERE ARE APPROXIMATELY 40 ACRES OF VACANT LAND ADJACENT TO THE SANTA FE NATIONAL CEMETERY WHICH COULD BE USED FOR EXPANSION OF THE CEMETERY. HOWEVER, LAND FOR THE EXPANSION OR ESTABLISHMENT OF A VETERANS NATIONAL CEMETERY MUST BE DONATED TO THE VETERANS ADMINISTRATION. THE LAND ADJACENT TO THE CEMETERY IS PRIVATELY OWNED. I LOOK FORWARD TO HEARING TESTIMONY ON HOW OR IF THIS LAND CAN BE ACQUIRED AND IN TURN DONATED TO THE VETERANS ADMINISTRATION.

THE CONGRESS PASSED A LAW IN 1978 TO ASSIST STATES IN EXPANDING OR ESTABLISHING STATE VETERANS CEMETERIES. UNDER THIS LAW, P.L. 95-476, THE STATE AND THE VETERANS ADMINISTRATION EACH CONTRIBUTE 50% OF THE FUNDS NECESSARY FOR THE CREATION OR IMPROVEMENT OF A STATE VETERANS CEMETERY WHICH IS THEM OPERATED BY THE STATE.

EVERY VETERANS SHOULD HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO BE INTERRED IN A VETERANS CEMETERY WITHIN HIS OR HER HOME STATE. WE MUST BEGIN TO ACT NOW TO ENSURE THAT THIS OPPORTUNITY IS PRESERVED FOR THE VETERANS OF NEW MEXICO. THEY HAVE HONORABLY AND COURAGEOUSLY SERVED THEIR COUNTRY TO PROTECT THE FREEDOM ALL AMERICANS ENJOY. WE MUST MAKE CERTAIN THAT VETERANS ARE AFFORDED THE PRIVILEGE OF BEING INTERRED NEAR THEIR FAMILIES, FRIENDS, AND LOVED ONES. THIS HEARING WILL GIVE THE SUBCOMMITTEE THE OPPORTUNITY TO FIND OUT HOW VETERANS IN NEW MEXICO WANT TO ADDRESS THE PROBLEM OF LIMITED SPACE IN THE SANTA FE CEMETERY.

IN ADDITION, I LOOK FORWARD TO HEARING HOW THE VETERANS' ADMINISTRATION GUARANTEED HOME LOAN PROGRAM IS WORKING. THIS PROGRAM WAS ESTABLISHED TO ENSURE THAT VETERANS HOUSING NEEDS ARE MET. MANY VETERANS, BECAUSE OF THEIR SERVICE TO OUR COUNTRY, HAVE NOT HAD THE

SAME OPPORTUNITY AS OTHERS TO ESTABLISH A FIRM CREDIT RATING OR FINANCIAL BASE. THE GUARANTEED LOAN PROGRAM ENCOURAGES PRIVATE LENDERS TO GRANT LOANS TO VETERANS BY DIMINISHING THE LENDER'S RISK. THE VETERANS ADMINISTRATION GUARANTEES UP TO 60% OF THE AMOUNT OF THE LOAN.

I MIGHT ADD THAT I WAS ALSO VERY DISAPPOINTED THE FUNDING FOR THE VETERANS MORTGAGE ASSISTANCE PLAN, WHICH WAS PASSED BY THE HOUSE, WAS DROPPED FROM THE HUD AND INDEPENDENT AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS BILL IN CONFERENCE AT THE REQUEST OF PRESIDENT REAGAN. I AM AT A LOSS TO UNDERSTAND WHY THE PRESIDENT WOULD OPPOSE A PROGRAM THAT WOULD HAVE PROVIDED LIMITED ASSISTANCE TO TEMPORARILY UNEMPLOYED VETERANS WHO ARE FACING MORTGAGE FORECLOSURE THROUGH NO FAULT OF THEIR OWN AND WOULD HAVE ALSO SAVED THE GOVERNMENT MONEY. A CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE REPORT STATED THAT EVEN IF ONLY 60% OF THE LOANS WERE PAID BACK, THE PROGRAM WOULD COST THE VA LESS THAN IF THEY HAD TO ACQUIRE AND SELL PROPERTY AFTER FORECLOSURE.

I WANT TO FIND OUT TODAY IF THE GUARANTEED LOAN PROGRAM IS ADEQUATELY SERVING THE HOUSING NEEDS OF VETERANS IN NEW MEXICO AND HOW THE MORTGAGE ASSISTANCE PLAN WOULD HAVE HELPED UNEMPLOYED VETERANS RETAIN THEIR HOMES.

FINALLY, I WANT TO TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO EXPRESS MY APPRECIATION TO DR. VICTOR WESTPHALL, HIS FAMILY AND THE DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE DAV VIETNAM VETERANS NATIONAL MEMORIAL IN EAGLE NEST, NEW MEXICO. THE WESTPHALLS LOST THEIR ELDEST SON IN VIETNAM. THEY BUILT THIS MEMORIAL TO HONOR THEIR SON AND ALL THOSE BRAVE YOUNG MEN WHO LOST THEIR LIVES AND SERVED IN VIETNAM. I HAVE INTRODUCED HOUSE RESOLUTION 135 EXPRESSING THE SENSE OF THE

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES THAT ALL AMERICANS JOIN IN EXPRESSING THEIR APPRECIATION TO THE WESTPHALL FAMILY AND THE DAV FOR THIS AWE-INSPIRING AND BEAUTIFUL MEMORIAL WHICH PAYS TRIBUTE TO ALL OF THOSE WHO GAVE THEIR LIVES TO PROTECT AND PRESERVE OUR WAY OF LIFE IN AMERICA. I WILL CONTINUE TO ACTIVELY WORK FOR THE PASSAGE OF THIS RESOLUTION.

AGAIN, I THANK YOU MR. CHAIRMAN FOR SCHEDULING THIS HEARING TODAY IN NEW MEXICO AND I WANT TO THANK MY DISTINGUISHED COLLEAGUE, CONGRESSMAN LUJAN AND EVERYONE FOR BEING HERE.

STATEMENT OF HON. MANUEL LUJAN, JR.

MR. CHAIRMAN, I APPRECIATE THE OPPORTUNITY TO BE WITH YOU TODAY TO DISCUSS THE NATIONAL VETERANS CEMETERY SITUATION IN THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO. THE EXISTINT CEMETERY IN SANTA FE AND THE PROPOSED CEMETERY IN ALBUQUERQUE ARE OF DEEP CONCERN TO ME AND HAVE BEEN FOR MANY, MANY YEARS.

THE SANTA FE CEMETERY IS AN HISTORICAL SITE WHICH PORTRAYS WITH DIGNITY, OVER A CENTURY OF AMERICAN HISTORY. WITH LAND ORIGINALLY DONATED BY THE CATHOLIC CHURCH, IT WAS ESTABLISHED AS A NATIONAL CEMETERY IN 1875. THE ORIGINAL INTERMENTS ARE REMAINS OF UNITED STATES SOLDIERS FROM FRONTIER POST CEMETERIES. THE FIRST TERRITORIAL GOVERNOR CHARLES BENT IS BURIED HERE. A LOCAL FRONTIER LEGEND EDWARD W. WYNKOOP AND GENERAL PATRICK J. HURLEY LIE AMONGST THOUSANDS OF AMERICANS WHO EACH CONTRIBUTED TO THE BUILDING AND MAINTAINING OF OUR GREAT COUNTRY.

THIS CEMETERY, AFTER A CENTURY OF OPERATION, IS NOW BEGINNING TO RUN OUT OF SPACE. AT THE PRESENT RATE OF BURIALS THE AVAILABILITY OF SPACE, (INCLUDING THE 13 ACRES WHICH IS NOW BEING DEVELOPED), WILL RUN OUT IN THE 1990s. THIS DOES NOT GIVE US A LOT OF TIME TO FIND A SOLUTION.

I HAVE FOR SOME TIME BEEN WORKING ON A TWO PRONGED SOLUTION FOR THE SANTA FE CEMETERY. THERE ARE 40 ACRES AVAILABLE TO THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT IMMEDIATELY [illegible]ENT TO THE PRESENT CEMETERY. THE COST OF THIS MUCH NEEDED [illegible] APPROXIMATELY $600,000. I HAVE HAD NUMEROUS MEETINGS WITH THE V[illegible] VETERANS GROUPS AND IT SEEMS TO ME THAT NOW IS THE TI[illegible]VE TO ACQUIRE THIS LAND. THE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE IN THE PAST HAS BEEN UNWILLING TO APPROPRIATE THIS MONEY. HOWEVER, WE CAN APPROACH THE SITUATION FROM TWO ANGLES. FIRST, I HAVE THIS YEAR INTRODUCED HR 2020 WHICH, IF PASSED, WOULD APPROPRIATE

THE NEEDED MONEY TO BUY THE LAND. THE BILL HAS BEEN REFERRED TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS.

SECONDLY, THE VETERANS ADMINISTRATION IS EMPOWERED TO ACCEPT LAND AS A DONATION. THERE EXISTS AN INTEREST AMONG VARIOUS VETERANS GROUPS TO EXPLORE THE POSSIBILITY OF THEIR PARTICIPATING IN PURCHASING THE LAND AND DONATING IT TO THE CEMETERY. I HAVE BEEN WORKING ON THIS POSSIBILITY. BUT, FRANKLY $600,000 IS BEYOND THE MEANS OF THE LOCAL ORANIZATIONS. WE ARE NOW RECEIVING BURIALS AT THE RATE OF 700 PER YEAR. THE NEW MEXICO VETERAN POPULATION IS 137,000. AT THIS RATE, AS I MENTIONED EARLIER, THE SANTA FE CEMETERY WILL REMAIN OPEN TO INTERMENTS UNTIL THE 1900s. WE MUST ACT SOON.

THE SECOND PROPOSAL WHICH I BROUGHT FORWARD RECENTLY, IS TO ESTABLISH A NEW STATE VETERANS CEMETERY IN ALBUQUERQUE. I HAVE HAD MEETINGS WITH THE HEADS OF ALL NEW MEXICO AND NATIONAL VETERANS ORGANIZATIONS AND THEY ARE ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT THE IDEA. AFTER TALKING WITH THESE ORGANIZATIONS. WITH STATE AND FEDERAL AUTHORITIES, I BELIEVE WE CAN INSTITUTE A PLAN WHEREBY THE VETERANS ADMINISTRATION AND THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO CAN SPLIT THE COST OF THE CEMETERY FIFTY-FIFTY. THIS HAS WORKED IN SEVERAL STATES ALREADY.

OVER ONE-THIRD OF THE STATE'S VETERANS LIVE IN ALBUQUERQUE. THERE IS ALSO THE DIFFICULTY AN ALBUQUERQUIAN HAS IN DRIVING TO SANTA FE TO VISIT THE CEMETERY DURING THE WINTER MONTHS.

I'VE MET WITH THE GOVERNOR, STATE LAND COMMISSIONER JIM BACA, MAYOR HARRY KINNEY OF ALBUQUERQUE AND COUNTY MANAGER ALEX ABEYTA. THEY ALL FAVOR THE PLAN AND SUPPORT IT ENTHUSIASTICALLY. COMMISSIONER BACA HAS EVEN OFFERED TO FACILITATE THE ACQUISITION OF STATE LAND FOR THE CEMETERY.

IN THIS REGARD, IT IS APPROPRIATE TO MENTION THAT THE STATE'S CONTRIBUTION CAN BE IN THE FORM OF THE LAND AND THE VETERANSS ADMINISTRATION CAN PROVIDE THE DEVELOPMENT AND CONTRIBUTE TO THE MAINTENENCE.

I HAVE BROUGHT A MAP OF THE AREA AROUND THE CITY OF ALBUQUERQUE WITH SEVERAL PARCELS OF STATE, COUNTY AND CITY OWNED LAND WHICH WOULD BE AVAILABLE FOR THIS PROPOSED CEMETERY. YOU CAN SEE THE POSSIBLE SITES. THIS MAP WAS PREPARED FOR ME BY NORMAN McNEW FROM THE OFFICES IN BERNALILLO COUNTY.

(point out locations on map)

I AM CONFIDENT THAT AS SOON AS WE SELECT WHICH OF THESE PARCELS WE CAN ACQUIRE, WE CAN BEGIN DEVELOPMENT. I AM HOLDING A MEETING WITH THE VARIOUS GOVERNMENT UNITS, IN ALBUQUERQUE TOMORROW TO SEE IF WE CAN IDENTIFY THE LAND TO BE USED FOR THE CEMETERY.

IT ONLY MAKES SENSE, WITH OVER ONE-THIRD OF THE VETERANS LIVING IN ALBUQUERQUE, TO LOCATE A SECOND NATIONAL CEMETERY IN THE STATE'S LARGEST CITY. THIS WILL RELIEVE THE PRESSURE ON THE SANTA FE CEMETERY.

MR. CHAIRMAN, THIS SUBCOMMITTEE CAN BE EXTREMELY HELPFUL TO US IN ACCOMPLISHING THESE GOALS. THE SUPPORT OF THE COMMITTEE FOR HR 2020 TO PURCHASE THE ADDITIONAL 40 ACRES IN SANTA FE WOULD HELP GIVE THE IMPETUS NECESSARY TO MOVE THE BILL THROUGH THE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE. THE ENDORSEMENT OF THE PROPOSED ALBUQUERQUE CEMETERY BY THIS COMMITTEE WOULD ALSO HELP US TO BEGIN THE PROJECT.

I THANK YOU FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO TESTIFY ON THIS SUBJECT WHICH HAS ALWAYS BEEN ONE OF MY TOP PRIORITIES. WE ARE PROUD OF THE FACILITY IN SANTA FE AND WE APPRECIATE YOUR ATTENTION TO IT.

FOR YOUR RECORD I WOULD LIKE TO SUBMIT SEVERAL LETTERS AND CORRESPONDANCE WHICH I HAVE HAD CONCERNING THE SANTA FE CEMETERY AND THE ALBUQUERQUE LOCATIONS.

THESE LETTERS INCLUDE A LETTER FROM JIM BACA, NEW MEXICO COMMISSIONER OF PUBLIC LANDS: A LETTER FROM CHARLES LUSCHER, STATE DIRECTOR OF THE BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT, A LETTER FROM HARRY WALTERS, ADMINISTRATOR OF THE VETERANS ADMINISTRATION: A LETTER FROM M.J. HASSELL, REGIONAL DIRECTOR OF THE FOREST SERVICE: A LETTER FROM ALBUQUERQUE MAYOR HARRY KINNEY: A LETTER FROM THE ZIA CHAPTER OF THE PARALYZED VETERANS OF AMERICA: A LETTER FROM ALEX ABEYTA BERNALILLO COUNTY MANAGER. ALSO FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION I REFER YOU TO H.R. 2020, INTRODUCED IN MARCH OF THIS YEAR.

AGAIN, MR. CHAIRMAN, THANK YOU FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO BE WITH YOU TODAY IN MY HOMETOWN OF SANTA FE.

State of New Mexico
OFFICE OF THE
Commissioner of Public Lands
Santa Fe

JIM BACA
COMMISSIONER

P.O. BOX 1148
SANTA FE, NEW MEXICO 87504-1148

June 27, 1983

The Honorable Manuel Lujan, Jr.
United States Congressman
1323 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D. C. 20515

Dear Congressman Lujan:

Enclosed is a listing of several parcels of state land located in the Albuquerque area. We also included a small map which will give you a general idea of their location. All of these sites have good access from the interstate highways and are relatively free from any long-range encumbrances.

You might keep in mind the 11,500 acre tract just south of Albuquerque for a cemetery as well as for a number of other uses. We will have a master plan on that property at an early date and the potential is high for orderly development of that whole area.

I certainly appreciate your interest and look forward to working with you in the future.

Sincerely,

Jim Baca

JIM BACA
COMMISSIONER OF PUBLIC LANDS

cc: Pleas M. Glenn

United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
NEW MEXICO STATE OFFICE
P.O. BOX 1449
SANTA FE, NEW MEXICO 87501

IN REPLY REFER TO
1120 (912)

JUN 23 1983

Honorable Manuel Lujan, Jr.
U.S. House of Representatives
1323 Longworth House Office Bldg.
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Lujan:

This is in response to your inquiry of June 13, 1983 seeking information about possible public land tracts near Albuquerque suitable for a new veteran's cemetery. All of the BLM managed public land in the vicinity of Albuquerque has been exchanged, sold or otherwise disposed of over the past 20 years. We really have nothing in Bernalillo County suitable for a cemetery. There are two tracts which could possibly be obtained by the Federal Government if the city of Albuquerque would convey them back to the BLM. The city obtained this land under the Recreation and Public Purposes Act but has not developed it yet. One is the San Antonio Regional Park near Cedar Crest on the east site of the Sandia Mountains. This is a nice parcel of about 15 acres. It has some large pine trees and would make a good cemetery although it is some distance east of town. The other parcel is the La Boca Negra Park which is west of town near Coors Road. This tract is 40 acres and the city has only developed a very small portion, approximately 2 acres.

If the city is willing to relinquish all or a portion of either of these tracts, they could be made available for a cemetery.

Another idea is the old Indian School on 12th Street which is now surplus property to be disposed of by the General Services Administration. This would make a good site but you would need to contact GSA on it.

If anything else comes to mind, we will contact you.

Sincerely yours,

Charles W. Luscher
State Director

Office of the
Administrator
of Veterans Affairs

Washington DC 20420

Veterans
Administration

APRIL 20 1983 600 – 700 per acre

700 Burials per year

APR 21 1983

Honorable Manuel Lujan, Jr.
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Lujan:

Your letter of March 28, 1983, requests information on the availability of Veterans Administration funds to purchase land adjacent to the Santa Fe National Cemetery for cemetery expansion. While Congress has the final authority and in keeping with long-standing VA policy explained below, no funds were appropriated for this purpose in Fiscal Year 1983 nor have any been budgeted in Fiscal Year 1984.

The VA makes every effort to expand existing national cemeteries, where feasible, to provide additional grave space and extend the longevity of those cemeteries. It is VA policy to acquire land for cemetery expansion either through donation by state or local governments, corporations, veterans' groups, or private citizens or through transfer of surplus federal land that is excess to the user agency. The VA does not purchase such land. If land adjacent to the Santa Fe cemetery that is suitable for cemetery purposes were offered to the VA as a donation, we would be pleased to consider such donation.

We believe that New Mexico with a veteran population of 137,000 is fortunate in having two open national cemeteries: Santa Fe is expected to remain open to interments until 1997, and Fort Bayard National Cemetery will have sufficient grave space well beyond the year 2000. Some states, like Washington, with 617,000 veterans; Connecticut, with 463,000; and Georgia, with 641,000, have no national cemetery or no open national cemetery.

An option the state of New Mexico may wish to consider is available under title 38, United States Code, section 1008, which authorizes the VA to assist states financially, on a matching basis, to establish, expand, or improve state veterans' cemeteries. This State Cemetery Grants provision of title 38 was specifically enacted to alleviate the shortage of burial plots in certain geographic areas that are too distant from established national cemeteries. The program complements our National Cemetery System and is helpful to veterans who wish to be buried closer to home. My Chief Memorial Affairs Director Paul T. Bannai, will be pleased to provide additional information. He may be reached on (202) 389-5202.

Thank you for your interest in veterans and the Santa Fe National Cemetery. I trust the information provided will be helpful to you.

Sincerely,

Everett Alvarez Jr
Deputy Administrator • For
HARRY N. WALTERS
Administrator

United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Region Three

517 Gold Avenue, SW
Albuquerque, NM 87102

JUN 27 1983

Reply to 5450

Date JUN 24 1983

Honorable Manuel Lujan, Jr.
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Lujan:

This is in reply to your letter of June 13, 1983, regarding the possibility of location of a veterans' cemetery in the Albuquerque area and requesting a " . . . list of all publicly owned properties and, if possible, their size and locations."

The only land under the jurisdiction of the Forest Service in the immediate vicinity of the City of Albuquerque is the National Forest land within the Sandia Ranger District, Cibola National Forest. Essentially, all of the National Forest land in the immediate Albuquerque vicinity is relatively steep, mountainous property which does not lend itself to development as a cemetery. Enclosed for your information is a map of the Sandia Ranger District.

Sincerely,

for M. J. HASSELL
Regional Forester

Enclosure

JUN

City of Albuquerque
P.O. BOX 1293 ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO 87103

ALBUQUERQUE NEW MEXICO 1706

MAYOR
Harry E. Kinney

CHIEF
ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER
Frank A. Kleinhenz

file

June 10, 1983

The Honorable Manuel Lujan, Jr.
United States House of Representatives
1323 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman ~~Lujan~~ Manny:

I have been notified by Zia Chapter, Paralyzed Veterans of America, of your efforts to initiate the development of a Veterans National Cemetery in Albuquerque. I am most pleased that you have taken this stand, and I hope your efforts are successful.

Inasmuch as Albuquerque is the state's largest city, it should be most appropriate for an additional national cemetery to be located in our community. Please let us know if the City of Albuquerque can be of assistance to you in this effort.

Sincerely,

Harry

Harry E. Kinney
Mayor

HEK/MR/br

cc: Ralph Markward, Executive Director,
Zia Chapter, Paralyzed Veterans of
America, Inc.

Zia Chapter
paralyzed veterans of america, inc.
833 GIBSON BLVD. S.E., ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO 87102
Telephone (505) 247-4381/82

JUN 13 1983

June 9, 1983

The Honorable Manuel Lujan Jr.
1323 Longworth House Office Bldg.
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Lujan:

The officers and members of the Zia Chapter, Paralyzed Veterans of America were elated when we heard of your efforts to initiate the proposed developement of a Veterans National Cemetery in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Needless to say, our members enthusiastically support this proposal.

Many of our veterans' families hesitate at interring their loved ones in the National Cemetery in Santa Fe because of transportation difficulties in traveling to Santa Fe from Albuquerque.

Please be assured, Congressman, I will send copies of this letter to our Congressional delegation plus the Governor of New Mexico and the Mayor of Albuquerque requesting their assistance in this noble adventure.

Sincerely,
Ron Gattas
Ron Gattas
President

Sincerely,
Ralph Markward
Ralph Markward
Executive Director

RG/met

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
LENTON MALRY, CHAIRMAN
DISTRICT 3
ORLANDO VIGIL, MEMBER
DISTRICT 2
PATRICK J. PADILLA, MEMBER
DISTRICT 1
MARION M. COTTRELL, MEMBER
DISTRICT 5
WRAY L. SIMMONS, MEMBER
DISTRICT 4
ALEX ABEYTA, JR., COUNTY MANAGER

County of Bernalillo
State of New Mexico
620 LOMAS, N.W.
ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO 87102

BOB V. STOVER, SHERIFF
JAMES B. LEWIS, TREASURER
DOLORES C. WALLER, COUNTY CLERK
EDWARD M. MURPHY, ASSESSOR
GERARD W. THOMSON,
PROBATE JUDGE

June 29, 1983

The Honorable Manuel Lujan Jr.
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Manuel:

In response to your letter of June 13, 1983, in which you request identification of publicly owned properties in Bernalillo County, Norman McNew, County Real Estate Administrator, compiled the enclosed lists of land owned by the City of Albuquerque, the County of Bernalillo, the State of New Mexico, and the Bureau of Land Management. The lands occupied by the National Forests, the Indian Reservations, or the Military Reservations were not listed; however, they are color coded on the attached map which was prepared by Mr. McNew.

There has been considerable change in the ownership of public lands in Bernalillo County in recent years, primarily because of the acquisition of the Elena Gallegos Land by the City, and the ensuing land trades between the City, Forest Service, and BLM. The City acquired 1,943.93 acres of BLM Land and 3,930.31 acres of Forest Land within Bernalillo County in the trade, and 7,025.84 acres of the Elena Gallegos Grant was traded to the Federal Government for wilderness and open space designation.

A large portion of the City owned land is included in the new Double Eagle II Airport site and the buffer zones on either side which are designated as a proposed shooting range and open space area.

The large block of State land in Township 9 North, Range 3 East, is the University Trust Lands.

As you will note, the County of Bernalillo does not have significant land holdings. The 50 acre tract is the site of the West Mesa Land Fill, and the other three sites listed are undeveloped park sites in the mountain area.

The listings do not include small tracts of land which are developed parks, fire station sites, building sites, etc. I believe your primary interest was in identifying larger tracts which might be utilized for upcoming projects.

If you have any questions on the property included on the lists or designated on the map, please feel free to contact Norman McNew or myself at 766-4000.

Sincerely,

Alex Abeyta Jr.
County Manager

Enclosure

AA/bo

STATEMENT OF
LOUIS R. MONTANO, MAYOR
CITY OF SANTA FE, N.M.
BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS AND MEMORIALS
JULY 22, 1983

MR. CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE, MY NAME IS LOUIS R. MONTANO. I AM THE MAYOR OF THE CITY OF SANTA FE AND I WOULD LIKE TO EXPRESS MY APPRECIATION TO YOUR COMMITTEE FOR GIVING US THE OPPORTUNITY TO DISCUSS WITH YOU THE RESOLUTION OF IMPORTANT ITEMS ON WHICH YOU WILL BE RECEIVING TESTIMONY.

I WOULD LIKE TO DIRECT ALL MY REMARKS TO THE VETERANS NATIONAL CEMETERY LOCATED HERE IN SANTA FE. THIS CEMETERY FOR LO THESE MANY YEARS HAS BEEN ONE OF THE SHOWPLACES OF SANTA FE. I WOULD LIKE TO EXPRESS THE APPRECIATION OF OUR TOWN FOR THE EXCELLENT JOB OF MAINTENANCE AND UPKEEP DONE BY THE VETERANS NATIONAL CEMETERY PERSONNEL. THE LOCATION OF THE CEMETERY MAKES THAT ENTRANCE INTO TOWN THE LOVELIEST OF THE THREE ENTRANCES INTO SANTA FE.

WE HAVE BEEN CONCERNED LEST THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT WITHDRAW FROM THE CEMETERY PROGRAM. IT IS A PROGRAM THAT I FEEL SURE WOULD HAVE A FINANCIAL BURDEN ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO BE MET BY EITHER THE CITY OF SANTA FE OR THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO. EVER SINCE THE STATE GRANT PROGRAM WAS ENACTED BY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT OUR CONCERN HAS BEEN HEIGHTENED. IT IS MY UNDERSTANDING THAT UNDER THAT PROGRAM THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT CONTRIBUTES ONE-HALF OF THE MONIES NEEDED TO ESTABLISH A STATE CEMETERY, BUT ONCE THE CEMETERY IS

ESTABLISHED, FUNDING FOR MAINTENANCE AND UPKEEP IS THE SOLE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE STATE. I COULD NEVER IMAGINE NEW MEXICO SUBMITTING A REQUEST FOR A STATE GRANT PROGRAM BECAUSE OF THE NATIONAL CEMETERY IN SANTA FE. ACCORDING TO MY INFORMATION THERE HAVE BEEN ONLY 5 OR 6 STATES THAT HAVE APPLIED FOR THE STATE GRANT PROGRAM AND THOSE WERE STATES THAT HAD NO NATIONAL CEMETERIES.

IT IS MY UNDERSTANDING THAT THE VETERANS ADMINISTRATION WILL NOT PURCHASE LAND FOR A NATIONAL CEMETERY, HOWEVER, THEY WILL ACCEPT DONATED LAND. WITH THIS UNDERSTANDING IT HAS ALSO COME TO MY ATTENTION THAT THERE ARE 40 ACRES TO THE NORTH OF SANTA FE CEMETERY THAT THE VETERANS ADMINISTRATION WOULD LIKE TO OBTAIN FOR EXPANSION PURPOSES. IT IS THAT 40 ACRES I WOULD LIKE TO SPEAK ABOUT. THAT 40 ACRES IS IN JOINT TRUST BETWEEN THE CITY OF SANTA FE AND SANTA FE ESTATES. I WOULD LIKE TO ASSURE THIS COMMITTEE THAT THESE 40 ACRES WILL BE MADE AVAILABLE FOR THE EXPANSION OF THE NATIONAL CEMETERY IN SANTA FE. IT IS MY INTENTION TO APPOINT THE CITY COUNCIL AS A COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE TO MEET WITH SANTA FE ESTATES AND RESOLVE THE MATTER OF THE 40 ACRES TO BE DONATED FOR THE EXPANSION OF THE CEMETERY.

I HAVE TRIED TO KEEP UP WITH THE NEEDS OF THE VETERANS ADMINISTRATION AS RELATES TO LAND. IT IS MY UNDERSTANDING THAT THERE ARE PRESENTLY 13 AVAILABLE ACRES THAT ARE TO BE DEVELOPED THE LATTER PART OF 1983 WITH THE COMPLETION TO BE IN THE LATTER PART OF 1985. AS I UNDERSTAND THIS WOULD MAKE AVAILABLE GRAVE SITES SUFFICIENT FOR 13 YEARS. I UNDERSTAND THAT THE DEVELOPMENT OF THESE 13 ACRES WILL HOLD UNTIL 1996. I WOULD LIKE TO ASSURE THIS COMMITTEE THAT IMMEDIATE PROCEDURES WILL BE INSTITUTED TO MAKE THESE ADDITIONAL 40 ACRES AVAILABLE BEFORE MY TERM OF OFFICE IS OVER.

AGAIN, I WOULD LIKE TO THANK YOU FOR THE OPPORTUNITY OF APPEARING BEFORE YOU TODAY AND AT THE SAME TIME THANK THE VETERANS ADMINISTRATION FOR THE OUTSTANDING MAINTENANCE WORK YOU PERFORM AT THE NATIONAL CEMETERY IN SANTA FE.

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20510

July 21, 1983

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Chairman
Subcommittee on Housing and
  Memorial Affairs
Committee on Veterans' Affairs
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Shelby:

I commend the Subcommittee for its work and the attention focused here today on New Mexico's need for expansion of the National Cemetery in Santa Fe or, as an alternative, establishment of a state veterans' cemetery.

I appreciate your invitation to participate in these hearings and know they will facilitate a dialogue between the Congressional representatives and the veteran community.

Best regards.

Sincerely,

Jeff Bingaman

JEFF BINGAMAN

STATEMENT
OF
SENATOR JEFF BINGAMAN
Before The
COMMITTEE ON VETERAN'S AFFAIRS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND MEMORIAL AFFAIRS

July 22, 1983
Santa Fe, New Mexico

Mr. Chairman, Representative Richardson, Representative Lujan, New Mexico veterans and their families, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to thank you for inviting me to the oversight hearings being held in Santa Fe today by the Subcommittee on Housing and Memorial Affairs of the House Veterans Affairs Committee.

I regret that Senate debate of the Department of Defense authorization bill prevents me from attending. I have asked Bill Huey of my Santa Fe Office to present this statement on my behalf. He will also be here throughout the hearing and report to me so I may be informed of the needs and priorities of our New Mexico Veterans.

One of those priorities to be discussed today is the establishment of another veterans cemetery in New Mexico.

I am aware of the alternative proposals under consideration. I look forward to hearing the testimony today from the veteran community in New Mexico, and will strongly support their determination as to which proposal will best fit their needs.

There are other veterans issues which deserve our attention. My offices receive many inquiries from veterans and their families about programs which affect them. My office continues to receive expressions of concern about the qualify of health services rendered by the Veterans Administration Medical Center.

Furthermore, at the state level, veterans report to me their problems of applying for and maintaining disability compensation benefits. Necessary documentation is often difficult to obtain from the VA. Although the burden of proof is on the veteran, the agency must be responsive to assist him or her to get the necessary information to make a legitimate claim.

Finally, we must remain attentive to the widows and survivors of veterans and assist them in every possible way.

I will continue to support veterans in critical areas such as Agent Orange and other health issues, employment, and just compensation in disability as well as educational benefits. It is tempting, in a time of peace and of budget constraints, to overlook these obligations. We cannot let this happen.

I thank you for the opportunity to express my views.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF JOSEPH S. CORDOVA, DIRECTOR, VETERANS ADMINISTRATION REGIONAL OFFICE, ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO. MR. NAHUM CASTILLO, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, REPRESENTING MR. CORDOVA.

Mr. Chairman, on behalf of Mr. Joseph S. Cordova, Director of the VA Regional Office in Albuquerque and our 107 employees, I am pleased to welcome you, other subcommittee members and your staffs to New Mexico. We appreciate this opportunity to testify concerning the administration of veterans' benefits programs in the State of New Mexico. I am accompanied today by our Adjudication Officer, Mr. Albert T. Breen; our Loan Guaranty Officer, Mr. Olin Westbrook; our Management Analyst, Mr. Raymond G. Murphy; and our District Counsel, Mr. Donald A. Adams.

The Department of Veterans Benefits consists of 58 Regional Offices. The Albuquerque Regional Office has jurisdiction for veterans' benefit programs throughout the State of New Mexico serving a veteran population of approximately 162,000 veterans, their dependents and survivors. It ranks 44th in size based on workloads and processes approximately 1% of the national workload. It ranks third, however, in the average monthly dollar benefit paid to veterans and dependents. Only Manila and Puerto Rico rank higher.

The Regional Office consists of six operating divisions, each responsible for a particular segment of services:

> The Support Services Division is composed of our Finance and Administrative Sections. The Administrative Section processes an average of 30,000 incoming and 14,000 outgoing pieces of mail each month. The Finance Section administers a very comprehensive and detailed accounting system, including payments to certain veterans and beneficiaries and other programs incident to financial operations such as debt collection activities and direct deposit programs.

The Personnel Division provides service in all phases of personnel administration. The Regional Office employee profile reflects a strong implementation of affirmative action policy which includes an excellent representation of veterans, minorities, and women. Most recent employment figures indicate that of our total VARO employment of 107, 62% are veterans; 28% are disabled; 22% have a compensable disability; 35% are Vietnam Era veterans; 42% are women; 36% are Hispanic; 7% are Black and 4% are Native Americans. All categories exceed the local makeup of civilian work force statistics.

The Loan Guaranty Division processes applications, develops necessary evidence and makes determinations regarding entitlement to home loan guaranty benefits. It also conducts appraisals to establish acceptable home values; services loans; acquires and disposes of properties; and assists eligible physically handicapped veterans to purchase specially-adapted homes with the aid of grants. Recent economy factors have seriously impacted our Loan Guaranty Division. The two main causes are unemployment on one side, and a decrease in home mortgage interest rates on the other. In an effort to prevent unnecessary foreclosures due to loss or reduction of employment income, the Loan Guaranty Division has interceded on behalf of veteran-constitutents and has asked all lenders, holders and servicers of VA-guaranteed home loans in New Mexico to offer veteran-borrowers an opportunity to reinstate delinquent accounts through reasonable repayment plans and other forms of forebearance. The trend toward lower interest rates which began last year has greatly increased loan processing workloads. While lower housing activity resulted in only 454 loans being processed by this station during Fiscal Year 1982, 1,579 were processed from October 1982 through March 31, 1983. Of the loans processed during Fiscal Year 1982, 327 New Mexico home loans were ultimately guaranteed with a total principal amount of $19,229,225. We expect to guarantee over 2,000 loans in the current fiscal year with a principal amount exceeding $96,146,275. We have been employing various measures to prevent timeliness and backlog problems in our loan processing and appraisal activities. As of July 8, we had a backlog of only 10 appraisals pending processing, and the date of receipt of the oldest appraisal report was June 20. In loan processing, 27 applications were pending, the oldest of which had been received by VA only 5 days earlier. We will continue our efforts toward keeping Loan Guaranty workloads under control to assure the high quality and timely service expected by our New Mexico veterans.

Our Vocational Rehabilitation and Counseling Division provides a full range of counseling, vocational rehabilitation and adjustment services to eligible persons. Primary candidates for these services are veterans who served in the Armed Forces during World War II and thereafter who were released from services under other than dishonorable conditions and suffered a compensable service-connected disability that caused employment handicaps. Secondary counseling services are available to spouses and dependents on request. These services are provided by professionally qualified Counseling Psychologists and Vocational Rehabilitation Specialists. Additionally, counseling and rehabilitation staff must assure that proper networks and productive working relationships exist with other individuals and organizations within the State to support extended efforts in providing employment assistance. Education enrollments have declined considerably in the last five years due to expiration of delimiting dates and/or exhaustion of benefits.

Presently, in New Mexico there are 4,513 veterans and dependents in training under Chapters 34 and 35 and an additional 305 vocational rehabilitation trainees under Chapter 31. The participation rate of eligible Vietnam Era veterans utilizing the education G. I. Bill in New Mexico ranks most favorably at 90.3% compared to a national average of 62.4%.

Our Veterans Services Division provides current information and assistance to veterans and their beneficiaries on all benefit programs. Presently, we are averaging close to 1,600 walk-in personal interviews and an average of 8,000 telephone interviews per month. Operation of a statewide toll-free telephone network enables the public to reach us at the price of a local call. Another very unique program in the Veterans Services Division is the Guardianship Program for incompetent veterans. This program has been greatly enhanced by close and cooperative working relationship with the New Mexico Veterans Service Commission. The NMVSC is the court-appointed fiduciary for 300 VA beneficiaries out of 329 New Mexico court-established fiduciaries. The Field Section of the Veterans Services Division renders legal assistance to the NMVSC which in substance eliminates the need for legal and attorney fees in the submission of accountings and other court pleadings. In this manner, benefits are payable to VA beneficiaries directly for their special needs and comforts rather than dissipated in administration fees such as those paid commercial banking institutions and other types of court-appointed fiduciaries. The Regional Office initiates the petition for appointment of fiduciary in appropriate District Court on behalf of the NMVSC. This extraordinary arrangement has long served as a model for guardianship programs in other states.

Last, but not least, is our Adjudication Division. Here, perhaps is the program involved with the most crucial of elements -- that of timeliness and accuracy in the delivery of benefits. This division processes applications, develops evidence, and makes decisions on claims for various benefits, including compensation, pension, educational assistance, burial allowances and others. This activity also authorizes the payment of awards and makes appropriate input through our Target computer system for payment.

In our Regional Office, we provide office space and facilities for a number of national veterans service organizations, i.e., American Legion, American Red Cross, AMVETS, Disabled American Veterans, Paralyzed Veterans of America, and Veterans of Foreign Wars. These offices and their staffs, under powers of attorney, provide advice and assistance to veterans and other beneficiaries in presenting their claims to the VA.

Migration trends of the 1970's would indicate that the early 1980's are bringing about a general continuation of mobility patterns from the mid and late 1970's. Should these migration flows continue along the same path, it is possible that more and more veterans will move South and West. It is expected that noticeable geographic shifts in the veteran population are likely to occur in the next decade even if the overall volume of movement is reduced over that evidenced in the 1970's. Statistically, the nation's fastest growing region with a 32.5% growth in veteran population is the Mountain area of the West, including New Mexico. This compares to a national veteran growth of 3.9%. Of the ten fastest growing veteran population states during 1970-1980, New Mexico ranked eighth with a 24.8% growth in veterans. Albuquerque's population is projected to double in the next 20 years.

A unique aspect of our veteran and dependent population served by our Regional Office is the high percentage of ex-prisoners of war from New Mexico. This results from the heroic 200th and 515th Coast Artillery Regiment of the New Mexico National Guard stationed in the Phillipines in 1941 and 1942 when Bataan and Corregidor fell to Japanese invaders. Of approximately 2,000 New Mexicans taken prisoner and subjected to the infamous Bataan Death March and years of captivity, 47% failed to return. Of the repatriated 1,000 plus, we still have 567 active POW claims folders and 183 survivor dependent claims folders. The Albuquerque Regional Office has had a history of compassionate and sensitive service to the ex-POW. Equally unique to this area is the varied culture of veterans served by our Regional Office. Over 20,000 veterans come from our Indian reservations and many more from numerous tribal pueblos. Approximately 50% of veterans in New Mexico are of Hispanic background.

Mr. Chairman, this completes my statement and I again wish to express our appreciation for the privilege of appearing before your subcommittee. If there are any questions, I will gladly try to answer or obtain the answer to them from my colleagues.

VA REGIONAL OFFICE, ALBUQUERQUE, NM
IMPACT ON ECONOMY - FY 1980-81

SELECTED VETERANS ADMINISTRATION EXPENDITURES IN NEW MEXICO

	Fiscal Year	
	1981	1982
Compensation	73,208,308	82,710,464
Pension	24,744,100	25,928,957
Readjustment and Vocational Rehabilitation (Chapters 34-31)	21,803,514	19,300,272
Insurance (Dividends, Indemnities)	8,080,795	8,218,390
Housing for Paraplegics	240,000	286,236
Total Benefits Listed	128,076,717	136,444,319

VETERANS' BENEFITS

STATISTICAL DATA FOR NEW MEXICO

	As Of 12/31/80	As Of 12/31/81	As Of 12/31/82
Veteran population in New Mexico (approx.).....	136,000	136,000	*162,000
Total Active Compensation and Pension Cases (Live and Death)............................	31,181	30,863	30,349
Number of Payees................................	33,750	33,015	32,113
Live (Total)................................	23,404	23,328	23,165
Compensation (53)........................	16,880	17,077	17,267
Pension (Old Law)........................	169	143	118
Pension (Public Law 97-588)..............	2,606	2,836	2,891
Pension (Section 306)....................	3,743	3,272	2,889
Death (Paid to Beneficiaries - Total).......	10,346	9,687	8,948
Compensation (Service-Connected).........	3,235	3,195	3,133
Widows...............................	1,693	1,763	1,808
Children.............................	671	614	565
Parents..............................	871	818	760
Pension (Old Law)........................	141	134	122
Widows...............................	139	132	119
Children.............................	2	2	3
Pension (Public Law 95-588)..............	871	994	1,095
Widows...............................	765	894	987
Children.............................	106	100	108
Pension (Section 306)....................	6,099	5,364	4,598
Widows...............................	3,197	2,973	2,723
Children.............................	2,902	2,391	1,875
Average Total Monthly Benefits (C&P)..........	$8,172,970	$8,904,136	$9,437,353
Veterans and Servicemen in Education Training under G. I. Bill (Chapter 34).................	4,485	4,453	3,884
College Level..............................	3,572	3,266	3,010
Below College Level........................	1,070	993	725
Apprenticeship and OJT.....................	203	194	149
Flight Training (included in below college level)....................................	70	82	22
Vocational Rehabilitation (Chapter 31).........	147	200	275
Wives, Widows and Children (Chapter 35)........	644	685	629

(*) Based on 1980 Census Data.

STATEMENT OF
RUDOLPHO LUJAN
DIRECTOR
SANTA FE NATIONAL CEMETERY
DEPARTMENT OF MEMORIAL AFFAIRS
VETERANS ADMINISTRATION
BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
FIELD HEARING AT SANTA FE, NEW MEXICO

JULY 22, 1983

Chairman Shelby of the Subcommittee and Congressman Richardson: On behalf of the Administrator of Veterans Affairs, Harry N. Walters, and the Chief Memorial Affairs Director, Paul T. Bannai, I thank you for the opportunity to appear before the committee this morning.

Your letter of June 23, 1983, expresses interest in receiving current information on the need for expanding the Santa Fe National Cemetery and/or the need to establish a state veterans' cemetery in New Mexico.

Before addressing both of these areas of interest in the order stated, let me provide you with a brief history.

The Santa Fe National Cemetery started as a military post cemetery in 1868 during a brief period of military activity within the territory of New Mexico. In 1870 additional land was donated by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Santa Fe to expand the cemetery. In 1875, with the acquisition of some land by the federal government for expansion, the cemetery became a national cemetery.

The original interments are the remains of 265 U.S. soldiers from Old Fort Marcy, and other battlefields. Beginning in 1896, remains from frontier post cemeteries including Fort Wingate and Fort Hatch, in New Mexico, were brought to Santa Fe. The first territorial governor, Charles Bent, is interred in the cemetery. There are six congressional medal of honor recipients: one Indian Scout, one man from the Indian Wars, one from World War I, two from World War II, and one from Vietnam among the 14,500 honored dead buried in the national cemetery.

The Santa Fe National Cemetery consists of 34.59 acres of which 21.46 acres are developed. The remaining 13.13 acres are being developed and should be ready for interments in late 1984. The new development will provide some 7,000 gravesites and will enable the cemetery to remain open until 1997. Some 600 veterans and dependents are buried each year at Santa Fe. No more land exists within the cemetery for future development.

The Veterans Administration makes every effort to expand national cemeteries, where feasible, to provide additional gravespace and to extend the longevity of those cemeteries. It is VA policy to acquire land for cemetery expansion either through donation by state or local governments, corporations, veterans' groups or private citizens or through transfer of surplus federal land that is excess to the user agency. The VA does not purchase such land from non-federal sources.

If land adjacent to the Santa Fe Cemetery that is suitable for cemetery purposes were offered to the Veterans Administration as a donation, VA would be pleased to consider such donation. The donable land must be suitable for cemetery development and contiguous or adjacent to the cemetery.

The VA believes that New Mexico with a veteran population of 137,000 is fortunate in having two open national cemeteries; Santa Fe, of course, and Fort Bayard, in southwestern New Mexico, which will have sufficient grave space well beyond the year 2000.

With regard to our state cemetery grants program, the state of New Mexico may want to consider the development of a State Veterans Cemetery with financial assistance of the Veterans Administration. Title 38, United States Code, section 1008, authorizes the Administrator of Veterans Affairs to make grants to states on a 50-50 matching basis to assist states in establishing, expanding, or improving state veterans' cemeteries.

An appropriation of $5,000,000 for that purpose was authorized for fiscal year 1980 and for each of the four succeeding fiscal years, through fiscal year 1984.

The Federal share of the payment can not exceed 50 percent of the total value of the land and the costs of the improvements. The state must provide perpetual maintenance of the state veterans' cemetery without Federal financial assistance. However, states are reimbursed $150 for each eligible veteran buried in a state veterans' cemetery.

The VA has made a continuous and aggressive effort to publicize the program. So far, eleven states, including the territory of Guam, have submitted 16 applications for federal assistance in the cost of establishing, expanding or improving state veterans' cemeteries; 24 additional states have expressed interest and plan to submit applications for federal assistance. Funds totaling $6.3 million have been obligated in support of 13 applications, and ten grants totaling $4.1 million, have been awarded.

The state cemetery grants program makes it possible for the States and the Federal Government to share their mutual obligation toward meeting the burial needs of our Nation's veterans. The establishment of state veterans' cemeteries complements our national cemeteries and makes it possible for every veteran, who so wishes, to be buried in a cemetery in his or her home state.

That concludes my statement, Mr. Chairman. Again, on behalf of Harry N. Walters, Administrator of Veterans Affairs, and Paul T. Bannai, Chief Memorial Affairs Director, thank you for the opportunity to appear before this Subcommittee hearing today.

I will try to answer any questions you may have, and if I can't answer them I will be sure that answers are provided in the near future.

The First National Bank in Albuquerque

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF JAMES R. KAMICAR

Vice President,
Mortgage Loans
The First National Bank
in Albuquerque, New Mexico

Presented July 22, 1983 to the
Subcommittee on Housing and
Memorial Affairs of the House
Veterans Affairs Committee,
U.S. House of Representatives
at Santa Fe, New Mexico

Gentlemen:

I would like to address this subcommittee from both a business and personal standpoint.

First, business: I have worked with the Veterans Administration's Home Loan Guaranty program for over 16 years, with VA offices in the State of Colorado and now the State of New Mexico.

The relationship I have enjoyed has been very gratifying. The service, co-operation, and performance that has been extended in connection with the Loan Guaranty Program has been outstanding.

In my opinion, the Loan Guaranty Program plays a vital role in the mortgage industry and has provided homes to veterans who, without the Veterans Administration, might not have had the opportunity of becoming homeowners.

From a personal standpoint, on the two occasions I have personally used the VA Guaranty for purchasing a home, once again the service, co-operation, and performance has been excellent.

Respectfully,

James R. Kam

JAMES R. KAMICAR
Vice President

Post Office Box 1305 / Albuquerque, New Mexico 87103 / Telephone (505) 765-4000
New Mexico's Largest Home-Owned Independent Bank   Member FDIC   Convenient Locations Citywide

July 22, 1983

TO: The Honorable Congressman Richardson,
Members of the Committee

In brief, the position of the Zia Chapter, Paralyzed Veterans of America on the issue of burial facilities for New Mexico veterans is as follows:

We fully support efforts to expand the current National Veterans Cemetary in Santa Fe by acquisition of adjoining acerage which will provide burial space for eligible veterans for the foreseeable future.

We recommend and support this course in preference to any other proposals for the burial of veterans which have been made or which may be made.

Zia PVA initially went on record as supporting a State Veterans Cemetary in Albuqueruqe. However, that position was taken on the basis of information which later proved to be inadequate.

Upon receipt of additional facts we have withdrawn our support for a State Veterans Cemetary in Albuquerque for the following reasons:

1) Altho' the Federal Government would provide financial assistance for development costs of a State Cemetary, the State of New Mexico would be obligated to pay all subsequent operational costs in excess of any burial benefits to which the deceased veteran may be eligible. We understand that this would be approximately $500,000 per year. Due to the drastic change in the financial position of the State of New Mexico, we do not believe that the State Legislature could or would make such a long-term funding committment.

2) While being buried in a State Veterans Cemetary is no disgrace, PVA feels that eligible veterans have a right to the honr of burial in a National Veterans Cemetary.

3) It is our opinion that expansion of the National Cemetary in Santa Fe is the most cost-effective method of providing for our veterans as well as the most desireable.

In summary, we support the expansion of the, Santa Fe National Cemetary and we are convinced, that the vast majority of New Mexico veterans concur with our position.

If at some time a State Veterans Cemetary can be developed and funded in addition to the Santa Fe expansion, we will consider supporting such a proposal.

Sincerely,

Ron Gattas
Zia Chapter PVA President

RG/tv

VFW

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF NEW MEXICO

SERVICE OFFICE
VETERANS ADMINISTRATION REGIONAL OFFICE
500 GOLD AVENUE, S.W., ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO 87102
PHONE 766-3477

LeRoy Vigil
Service Officer

July 22, 1983

Congressman Bill Richardson
Federal Bldg., Rm. 129
Cathedral Place
Santa Fe, NM 87501

RE: National Cemetery vs State Cemetery

Dear Congressman Richardson:

I am here on behalf of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Department of New Mexico, representing our Department Commander, Elmo J. Whitmore, and our Department Quartermaster/Adjutant, James L. Kimery, both whom had prior commitments and could not be here today.

My name is LeRoy Vigil and I am the Department Service Officer. I thank you for the opportunity to be here today, representing over 12,000 active VFW members from the great State of New Mexico.

The VFW has conducted a random sampling of its membership and are unanimously united in favor of expanding the National Cemetery in Santa Fe. We feel this expansion should take place through negotiating the acquisition, either by purchase or gift, of the adjoining property known as the Dempsey Estate.

In the alternate, the New Mexico Veterans of Foreign Wars would favor and support, the creation of a National Cemetery located in Albuquerque, rather than a "state" cemetery.

We are strongly opposed to the idea of establishing a Veterans State Cemetery in Albuquerque that would be funded through a partnership between the Veterans Administration and the State of New Mexico. We feel that having to approach the New Mexico State Legislature on a yearly basis, coupled with the uncertainty of the Legislative budget providing adequate funding year in and year out, would not serve the best interests of the New Mexico veteran and his loved ones to opt for a state-run veterans cemetery at this time.

Honor the Dead, By Helping the Living, is made possible by VFW membership dues.

However, we wish to note that many good or excellent ideas have been unpopular in the past, beginning with the signing of the Declaration of Independence in 1776, and as recent as the Carrie Tingley Veterans Home in Truth or Consequences, which took years before it was finally approved. The idea of expanding the present cemetery or the creation of an Albuquerque based National Cemetery fits into this category.

We believe that New Mexico presently has enough able leaders in Government at the Federal, State, and local levels that can work together in conjunction with the Service Organizations to negotiate a trade, purchase or other acceptable settlement that would satisfy the objection of "cost" that is uppermost in the minds of the Veterans Administration at present.

Mr. Congressman, as today's spokesman for over 12,000 concerned Veterans of Foreign Wars, Department of New Mexico, and members of your constituency, we urge your enthusiastic support for this very important and worthwhile project of great concern to our membership: The expansion of the present National Cemetery in Santa Fe, or the creation of a new National Cemetery in Albuquerque. We in turn offer our support and assistance when and as needed.

Respectfully submitted,

LeRoy Vigil

LE ROY VIGIL
VFW State Service Officer
Department of New Mexico

NEW MEXICO
VIETNAM VETERAN LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

DIRECTOR
John M. Garcia

The Vietnam War and its aftermath have left millions of Americans with scars. 57,000 men were killed, leaving their families shattered and confused, unable to deal with the guilt they feel for having patriotically encouraged their sons and husbands to fight in a war the government finally dismissed as a mistake. 300,000 were wounded; they and their families too have had a difficult time dealing with disabilities which seem to have no meaning. 850,000 veterans suffer from Post-Vietnam Stress Disorder (according to V.A. figures); they and their families continue to live tortured lives, fraught with bitterness, anger and despair.

For the First time in history, American lost a war and Americans turned their backs on their returning veterans; for the dead, there were no tributes, for the living, norrewards. Never before had veterans been brought home in the dead of night, processed back to civilian life within 48 hours and left to fend for themselves in an uncaring and sometimes hostile society, Our veterans were attacked as "baby-killers" by those who opposed the war, maligned as "losers" or "drug addicts" by those who supported it. They were targets of abuse while the war continued; they were ignored after it was lost. Their parents, wives and children were unprepared to help them, and became enmeshed in their problems without understanding what had happened.

More than 60,000 veterans have died since returning from Vietnam as a result of suicide, drug and alcohol abuse and one-car accidents; their families continue to suffer. Physical and emotional illnesses attributed to the trauma of the war experience which plague veterans include: depression, suicidal

7833 Lomas N.E. • Suite 8 • Albuquerque, New Mexico 87110 • (505) 265-1311

NEW MEXICO
VIETNAM VETERAN LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

DIRECTOR
John M. Garcia

According to a national survey on veterans done in 1979; there are 29 million veterans in this country. 25 million served during War time or 37%, of that 12 million served during World War II and 8.4 million served during the Vietnam conflict or nearly 1/3 of the wartime veterans. 5.7 million or 23% served during the Korean conflict and of the 5 million participants in World War I only 614 thousand remain.

78,000 N M

This same survey also indicated 11.5% of the veteran population wanted to be buried in a National Cemetary. Nearly 16% were undecided and slightly over 2% could not answer because they were unaware of the availability of burial in a National Cemetary.

Therefore assuming that the undecided and those unaware would eventually choose along the same lines as those veterans deciding burial in a National Cemetary is 14.1%, this translates to a potential 4.1 million veterans who will eventually choose burial in a National Cemetary. The Vietnam Veterans being the generally a younger group are more undecided about burial plans than the total veteran group. Currently the Santa Fe National Cemetary will reach its capacity by 1994 and at that time the Vietnam Veterans average age will be 40 - 45.

7833 Lomas N.E. • Suite 8 • Albuquerque, New Mexico 87110 • (505) 265-1311

ideation, sleep disorders, emotional numbing, survivor guilt, flashbacks to Vietnam, distrust of authority and government, negative self-image, problems with intimate relationships, distancing from wives and children, rages and self-destructive acts.. Their families suffer as well.

The problems have not disappeared because we have ignored them. As a society, we have a responsibility to help our veterans and their families, to come to terms with our own indifference and to work to undo the damage which has been done. Patriotism demands not only that we send our young men off to war, but that we take them back, that we grieve for the dead and accept the living. Veterans and their families need to be cared for by the society they trusted. We owe them concern; we owe them rehabilitation; we owe them respect.

Global International Mortgage Corp.

July 22, 1983

Congressman Richardson and Sub-committee
State Capitol
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87501

Dear Congressman Richardson and Gentlemen of the Sub-committee:

I would like to introduce myself to you at this time. My name is Les Goldman. I am a Registered Mortgage Loan Broker, with offices in Albuquerque and Santa Fe.

Here is a little background of myself. I am a charter member and past Commander, two (2) years of the Jewish War Veterans, Post 203, Rio Rancho. I was a founder and past Chairman of the Service Veteran Council of Rio Rancho, consisting of the Jewish War Veterans and Disabled Americans Veterans, AMVETS, American Legion and Veteran of Foreign Wars, all under one roof. I am also very heavily involved with the varies Veterans Organizations in the State of New Mexico. I have just had the pleasure of being elected a Vice-Commander of the Jewish War Veterans of the Southwest Region.

I feel I am well qualified to make the following statement. I think at this time not only is it important but imperative, for you Congressman Richardson and members of your sub-committee to look into the matter of enlarging the present Veterans cementary in Santa Fe due to the fact that we are slowly using up the remaining lots that are available. I think that if we don't take action now we will find ourselves in the very near future without any lots to provide to our Veterans who have served in the many wars.

I believe that the idea of opening a Cementary in Albuquerque cannot be done at the present time, nor do I see it in the near future, especially is we have to burden the state with the maintenance of the program for the cementary in Albuquerque; because, I feel that the present State Legislature would in no way help with the upkeep (with the reduction in the budget the Honorable Tony Anaya has now put on the state).

Congressman Richardson, Members of the Sub-Committe, NOW is the time, there is no tomorrow, for you to proceed with the acquisition of said property contiguous to the present property (Veterans Cementary) here in Santa Fe.

Sincerely,

Lester H. Goldman
Vice-Commander
Jewish War Veterans
Southest Region

LHG/bjm

5700 Harper Drive N.E. Suite 100 • Albuquerque, New Mexico 87109 • (505) 821-2222

1912

STATE OF NEW MEXICO

VETERANS' SERVICE COMMISSION
P. O. BOX 2324
SANTA FE, NEW MEXICO 87503

TONEY ANAYA
GOVERNOR

RICHARD ROCCO
DIRECTOR

July 18, 1983

STATEMENT

As Director of the Veterans' Service Commission, I have met with leaders of the various veterans' organizations within the state. I have also met with the Director of the Santa Fe National Cemetery, as well as with Representative Manuel Lujan.

The consensus of the leaders of the veterans' organizations is that they would like to enlarge the National Cemetery and that the forty (40) acres be purchased for this project.

The veterans' organizations feel that if we go along with acquiring a state cemetery, it will encumber the state with the fiscal responsibilities from here on in.

The present cost of maintaining a cemetery in Santa Fe is approximately $400,000. The cost of developing land for this use is well over $1,000,000. The veterans' organizations feel that they would have a difficult time getting state legislation to appropriate money on a continuing basis.

Other alternatives that are being looked into are the acquisition of either state, federal or city land.

I will be happy to work with any individual or organization on this endeavor.

Richard Rocco
Director

Dominici

THE AMERICAN LEGION
DEPARTMENT OF NEW MEXICO
3205 Central Ave., NE
Albuquerque, N. M. 87106
Telephone 265-5953

CHAIRMAN VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
HEARING HELD IN SANTA FE, NEW MEXICO JULY 221983

Mr Chairman:

TheAmerican Legion has endorsed and is striving for the expansionof the National Cemetery in Santa Fe, New Mexico. The American Legion had been leaning towards the establishment of a state operatedNational cemetery in Albuquerque but in reviewing the facts andexaming the law pertainingto this we have found the following facts:

1. According to the Law, If a State Operated National cemetery is established the Federal Government will assist with 50% of thetotalcost of the land for the development of the cemetery, this means that if the state donated land with a value of $ 100,000 , the Government would AID THE STATE WITH $50,000 . This amount would probably be sufficient to develop 4 or 5 acres.

As we interpret the law, the federal government would not be obligated to aid with any more funds.

The thinking on this is that the $300.00 burial allowance would be used to pay the State for the burials taking place in the State Operated cemetery. The one fallacy with this thinking is that under the change in the law a few years ago not all veterans are eligible for the burial allowance . Only veterans that are recieving compensationand or are in a V.A. facility at the time of their demise are eligible for the burial allowance. This would put the State operated National cmetery in the position of chargeing Veterans who were not eligible for theBurial allownace a minimum of $300.00 for a plot. Having this choice , We believe that the majority of the veterans would either still prefer to be interred at the Santa Fe National Cemetery or in a cemetery of their

THE AMERICAN LEGION
DEPARTMENT OF NEW MEXICO
3205 Central Ave., NE
Albuquerque, N. M. 87106
Telephone 265-5953

choice, closer to their home. This also means that over 60% of the Veterans of New Mexico would not be getting a free burial plot as was envisioned when theoriginal law was passed.

When we went into the service we were all told there some basic benefits for every veteran which we could expect. number one was a free burial plot, number 2 was a flag to drape the casket number three was a memorial marker (Headstone) Number four if you were a Veteran of a war time era was the Burial allownace and number 5 was the right to Military honors if the man power was available. The Burial Plot in New Mexico is still available The Burial allowance now has conditions tied to it . The flag is still available.The headstone is still available, but the military honors are almost never available.

Another question on a State Operated National Cemetery is the question of dependents. would they be eligible and what would the cost for them be. Could the state be able to bear the cost of opening and closing the graves or would this be an added burden on the Veterans of this State.

The American Legion goes on Record that we do not believe that at thistime with the change in elegibility for recieveing the Burial allowance and with all the unanswered questions on a state operated National cemetery that we could support a state operated National cemetery in Albuquerque. We can not see where the State of New Mexico could subsidize a State Cemetery at the tune of $400,000 a year. We would endorse a bill by either the Congress of the United State or the State of N.M. for funds to purchase additional land adjacent to the Santa Fe National cemetery to effect an expansion.

We wish to thank the committee for allowing us to testify

L.A. SANTILLANES ,DEPT. ADJ.

STATEMENT OF RAYMOND JIM
VETERANS SERVICE OFFICER

AND

SAMUEL SANDOVAL
FOUR CORNERS NAVAJO VETERANS, INC.

SHIPROCK, NEW MEXICO
(Window Rock, Arizona)

BEFORE THE SUB-COMMITTEE ON MEMORIAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE ON
VETERANS AFFAIRS, NEW MEXICO HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WITH RESPECT TO
REQUESTING MATCHING FUNDS TO BE APPROPRIATED FOR
NAVAJO NATIONAL VETERANS CEMETARY, July 22, 1983

MR. CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE SUB-COMMITTEE:

On behalf of 12,000 to 15,000 Navajo Nation Veterans, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to present to you our proposition and views regarding our request for matching funds for establishing a Navajo Nation Veterans Cemetary, 38 USCS Sect. 1008, PL 95-476 of 1978 (guidelines on how to obtain funding).

As you know, Mr. Chairman, the Navajo Nation Veterans Affair do not have a nationally recognized veterans cemetary for burial of their deceased veterans and their families.

At this time, the Navajo Nation is planning and wants to obtain matching funds from this respective state to establish a national cemetary and obliviate the full burden of the cost, for the interment of deceased Navajo servicemen, veteran, spouse, and surviving dependants.

The Navajo Nation plans and intends to select a site within this respective district or a centralized location for interment of their deceased veterans.

The Navajo Nation is in itself a distinct government whom has its own governing body that has its own Administrative and Judicial Procedures, but the U.S. Government is a guardian Ad Litem over the Navajo Tribe.

When Ronald Reagan was running for office and after he was elected to the Presidency of the United States he has told the Indian people (Navajos) and after he was elected, he reaffirmed that promise that he would work with Indians on a government to government basis.

This Sub-committee should be aware of the fact that recently (1982) Harry Walter, Administrator of Veterans Administration, requested and approved $1.6 million dollars for the Republic of Guam for a National veterans cemetary:

It should be noted and understood that Guam is not a state within the meaning of United States Constitution nor is it a recognized tribe, if the Honorable Harry Walter can approve a large sum of money in the interest of Guam, he should not find much to disapprove, since this distinct government is within the territorial jurisdiction of the United States and is also within the jurisdiction of (3) three states (New Mexico, Arizona, & Utah).

It should also be noted that the Navajo Tribe has their own tradition and their own culture and these should be recognized and understood why the Navajo Tribe wants to bury their deceased veterans within their home reservation.

The problem the Navajo reservation is trying to avoid is burying their deceased veterans in foreign cemetaries where the Navajo Tribe has to pay for private plots, etc.

If this sub-committee approves our requests for matching funds persuant to 38 USCS sect. 1008, we will abide by the State guidelines.

A geological survey will be done by the Bureau of Indian Affairs for a spot to be chosen. For this sub-committee's information, a survey was made by the Office of Navajo Veterans Affairs office to see how many veterans will be served:

12,876	veterans
2,996	widows
1,212	dependants
17,084	TOTAL

If this state cannot recognize the Navajo Tribe as a distinct government, the Senate and House Sub-committee will consider a bill or modify 38 USCS, sect. 1008 for the benefit of the Navajo Nation.

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to express our concern and our request.

Attached as exhibits correspondents A, B, and C.

Exhibit F

Legal counsel
House

Veterans Administration

Office of The Chief
Memorial Affairs
Director

Washington, D.C. 20420

JUN 2 2 1983

Nelson J. Betoney, Deputy Director
Navajo Office of Veteran Affairs
The Navajo Tribe — Box 430
Window Rock, Arizona 86515

Dear Mr. Betoney:

In response to your June 13, 1983 letter soliciting a matching fund grant for a Navajo Nation Cemetery, the grant program that is alluded to is under the provision of 38 U.S.C. Section 1008 and is to aid States in establishing, expanding or improving state owned veteran cemeteries.

The General Counsel of the Veterans Administration has ruled, however, that a tribal government is considered a distinct government entity and not a "State" for the purposes of section 1008 grants. The VA, therefore is not able to participate in the establishment of a cemetery for only Navajo veterans.

In order to qualify for assistance, title to the site must be vested in the State and the cemetery operated solely for the interment of persons eligible for burial in a national cemetery.

I regret that my response could not be favorable.

Sincerely,

Paul T. Bannai

PAUL T. BANNAI
Chief Memorial Affairs Director (40)

RECEIVED

JUN 28 1983

OFFICE OF VETERAN AFFAIRS
Box 430
Window Rock, Ariz. 86515

In Reply Refer To:

THE NAVAJO NATION
WINDOW ROCK, NAVAJO NATION (ARIZONA) 86515

PETERSON ZAH
CHAIRMAN, NAVAJO TRIBAL COUNCIL

EDWARD T. BEGAY
VICE CHAIRMAN, NAVAJO TRIBAL COUNCIL

July 8, 1983

Paul T. Bannai, Director
Memorial Affairs
Veterans Administration
Washington, D.C.   20420

Dear Mr. Bannai:

In reading your letter of denial dated the 22nd day of June, 1983 in reference to the "Navajo Nation Veterans Cemetery" in requesting to expanding or improving Navajo Veterans Cemetery for Navajo Veterans, we find your reasons flaw or either the law is vague. Since it is speaking of states and veterans in the reading of 38 USCS 1000 to 38 USCS 1008.

Please take notice, Navajos were not asked if they resided in a state or on a reservation when they enlisted for active duty in the armed forces. With respect to the Veterans Administration's General Counsel's assumption, that the Navajo Nation (Navajo Tribe) is not a state is totally irrelevant and is without merit.

When these laws and regulations were being written it was intended to include all veterans whether they resided on a reservation or not. The United States Supreme Court has interpreted various decisions involving the Navajo Tribe and other Indian tribes throughout the United States as being states, since its laws and regulations are derived from the same constitution the United States Government operates under. To dictate this philosophy case by case would be uncalled for, since the General Counsel should be well familiarized with these areas of law.

Since the Congress and Senators have the authority to pass, modify, amend and veto laws, the Supreme Court of the United States has the authority to interpret laws which are vague in itself, and in which instances the Supreme Court has clarified a reservation to be a state since it has its own inherented laws to govern itself.

Therefore, for the reasons stated above, we are requesting the Memorial Affairs Office to reconsider our request for matching funds pursuant to 38 USCS § 1008.

Respectfully,

Nelson Betonie, Deputy Director

CONCURRENCE:

Peterson Zah, Chairman
Navajo Tribal Council

cc: File/Chrono

Ex[illegible]

United States Department of the Interior
BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20245

IN REPLY REFER TO:
Code 200

JUL 15 1983

Peterson Zah, Chairman
Navajo Tribal Council
P.O. Box 709
Window Rock, Aarizona 86515

Dear Mr. Zah:

On July 12, 1983, my staff had the pleasure of meeting with the Navajo Office of Veterans Affairs' delegation.

One item discussed was the designation of a cemetery as a veteran's cemetery and as a National Historic Site. Dr. Annetta Cheek, National Park Service Staff Archeologist, explained the procedures for nominating a site and the potential for funding from the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation to renovate the site. The Navajo Area archeological staff should be able to assist your Veterans Affairs Department on the nomination of the cemetery.

The other issue discussed concerned the need for Veterans Administration loans for purchasing homes. The problem in obtaining VA home loans is the trust status of reservation land. Mr. Robert Donlevy, Realty Specialist, explained that VA or FHA will provide home loans if the applicant has a lease for the homesite. The lease and house become assignable to the VA or FHA. If the homeowner defaults on his loan, VA or FHA can evict the person and find another qualified applicant to assume the home and the leased homesite. Mr. Donlevy told your Commission to have the Navajo Area Realty staff call him at the Phoenix Area Office (FTS:261-2275) and he can direct them to the VA/FHA staff in Phoenix that handles these cases.

In closing, we enjoyed meeting with Messrs. Dayzie, Chee, Betony, Jim, and Lewis, and we hope we provided them with the information they needed.

Sincerely,

L Miller

Director, Office of
Trust Responsibilities

STATEMENT OF NELSON J. BETONEY
Deputy Director
OFFICE OF NAVAJO VETERANS AFFAIRS
WINDOW ROCK, NAVAJO NATION, ARIZONA

PRESENTED TO: The House Sub-Committee on Veteran Affairs on the Hearing of Housing and Memorial Affairs

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

I appreciate this opportunity to represent the Navajo Veteran Commission, Navajo Nation, in testimony regarding the housing needs of the 12,876 Navajo veterans, 2,196 widows and 1,212 children of deceased Navajo veterans who reside on the Navajo Reservation.

For the record, Navajo veterans have compiled an extraordinary record of military service on behalf of the United States; Presidents from Calvin Coolidge to Ronald Reagan have expressly commended the Navajo people for their bravery, courage and personal self-sacrifice.

Recently, the United States Government demonstrated a new willingness to express the Nation's indebtedness to the Navajo Nation for the contributions of its veterans. On July 28, 1982, President Reagan signed House Joint Resolution 444 into law as Public Law 97-225, designating August 14th of each year as Navajo Code Talkers Day.

Despite public acknowledgements such as this, Navajo Veterans have never been able to gain treatment and benefits from the Federal Government on a parity with other non-Indian veterans and in many cases have been totally excluded from key benefits and programs instituted expressly for veterans; foremost among these are various housing benefits, including home loans.

Responding to the special housing needs of Navajo veterans is particularly important because of the grave unemployment and acute hardship which persists within the Navajo Nation. Such a situation is particularly ironic since the Navajo people have contributed so significantly to the military security of the United States.

However, this is both the Federal Government's and the Tribe's responsibility. The U.S. Government has taken no positive action to ensure that Navajo Veterans have a realistic opportunity to participate in housing assistance programs which are made available through the Veterans Administration. Some Navajo Veterans have enjoyed full-time and steady employment. They should be eligible for privately financed home construction and purchase loans. Yet, the Veterans Administration Home Loan Guarantee Program is not available on the reservation because of the unwillingness of banks and lending institutions to extend such credit even with a Veterans Administration loan guarantee. The Navajo Veterans Commission is attempting to persuade the Veterans Administration of the need to establish a Regional Office on the Navajo Reservation. If such an office existed it would be able to overcome the reluctance of banks to extend credit to Navajo Veterans as well as to provide an example that non-Veterans who are good credit risks can, and will, repay such loans.

We propose that the Veterans Administration meet these categories of need by designating the entire Navajo Reservation equal with states through an appropriate policy interpretation or through a legislative amendment to the 38 USC. Further, we would like to emphasize that the need is urgent and Congress should act to address these needs. If the Veterans Administration were to provide Indian Veterans housing guarantee, it would stand a good chance of making private financing available for Navajo Veterans who could afford it. The authority for a 100% guarantee would obviously be attractive to private lenders than a limited guarantee now abailable through the Veterans Administration. This would require a cooperative effort with Federal Agencies having financing jurisdictions over Indian Tribes. There should be no reason to force Navajo Veteransto a limited guarantee authority pursuant to the Veterans Administration's limited guarantee policies.

Further, we would propose that this Act of Congress could be the delivery system so urgently needed to provide housing benefits and home loans for Navajo Veterans. This system could be designed in connection with the "Indian Housing Act of 1982" now at the stage of a legislative process for the benefit of Indian Tribes. The passage of the "Indian Housing Act of 1982" should not exclude Indian Veterans from being eligible for other federally assisted housing programs. I would like to point out that sufficient funds should be earmarked in loan guarantee funds which would make it possible for the Veterans Administration or the BIA to guarantee loans for Indian Veterans because in the past allocations have not been enough to meet the total need for privately financed homes on all reservations. Again, we would mention the fact that the existence of a 100% loan guarantee on a cooperative basis with the BIA may succeed in breaking down the reluctance of private lenders to make loans on reservations.

I would like to submit for inclusion in the record the attached description of the Navajo Veterans Commission overall housing program.

I would like to commend members and staff on the Committee, and your counterparts in the House of Representatives, for your interest in hearing the Veterans housing situation of the Navajo Reservation.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on behalf of the Navajo Veterans Commission. I would be pleased to continue to work with you for the purpose of helping Indian Veterans toward the goal of decent housing.

DEPART EXICO

DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS

2511 UTAH, N.E.
P. O. BOX 3907 - STATION D
ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO 87190-3907
TELEPHONE (505) 294-6193

STATEMENT FOR EXPANSION OF SANTA FE NATIONAL CEMETERY

WHEREAS, The Santa Fe Cemetery was established on June 2, 1870 on land donated by Archbishop John B. Lamy; and

WHEREAS, On September 10, 1892, by orders of the War Department, it was designated as a National Cemetery; and

WHEREAS, The Santa Fe National Cemetery Consisting of 34.59 acres is rapidly running out of room for future burials; and

WHEREAS, There are over 180,000 veterans now residing in the State of New Mexico; and

WHEREAS, Because World War II Veterans are 65 years of age or over, there is a growing need for expansion of the Santa Fe National Cemetery; and

WHEREAS, There is available approximately 57 acres contiguous to the existing cemetery, with ingress and egress only thru the cemetery;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED That the Disabled American Veterans, Department of New Mexico urge Congress to take immediate action for the acquisition of said land by negotiation, either by purchase or gift.

IT IS FURTHER RESOLVED That any federal or state land excess to the the needs of the Federal or State Government be set aside for the establishment of an annex to the Santa Fe National Cemetery.

Sena Plaza
Telephone 982-2573

David McNeill
President

SANTA FE ESTATES, INCORPORATED
P. O. Box 89
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87501

July 26, 1983

Honorable Richard Shelby, Chairman
Subcommittee on Housing & Memorial Affairs
Longworth Building
Washington, DC 20515

Subject: Additional Lands for National Cemetery, Santa Fe, New Mexico. Namely 40+ acres north of present National Cemetery.

Dear Congressman Shelby:

The purpose of this letter is to set the record straight with regard to the above subject.

Santa Fe Estates, Incorporated owns 40.413 acres of land adjacent to, and north of, the present National Cemetery, not 47 acres, as was stated at your hearing on July 22, 1983, by Rep. Manuel Lujan.

Mr. Alfredo Garcia, representing the Mayor of Santa Fe, Honorable Louis Montano, misstated some items.

#1. Mr. Garcia, led the subcommittee to believe that an agreement between the City of Santa Fe and Santa Fe Estates had virtually been consummated for a trade of lands.

#2. Mr. Garcia also stated that Santa Fe Estates holds the subject land in trust for the City of Santa Fe.

For the record:

Santa Fe Estates, Incorporated was founded by the late Congressman John J. Dempsey, in 1930, under an agreement between himself and the City of Santa Fe. City of Santa Fe, under this agreement, deeded two thousand acres of land to Mr. Dempsey; later, to be deeded to a corporation of his choice; and he, or the corporation, would then split the profits with the City, not 1/8 or 1/4, as stated by Rep. Lujan. The subject land is part of this agreement. The lands are not held in trust for the City of Santa Fe.

Santa Fe Estates, Incorporated to
Honorable Richard Shelby

Page #2

No agreement has been consummated for a trade of subject land for other lands owned by the City of Santa Fe.

Mayor Montaño did call me on July 21, 1983, and asked if we (Santa Fe Estates) would make a trade -- not stating what properties of the city would be exchanged. This is all we have heard of such an exchange, until your hearing.

Mr. Garcia stated that the exchange property would be across the street (highway) from the 40+ acres. He failed to mention that Santa Fe Estates also owns that land, as well.

These lands are held and owned by Santa Fe Estates, and are not a part of the Dempsey estate.

As a veteran, I, and a majority of all other veterans, expect to be buried in a National Cemetery. However, the Santa Fe Estates cannot donate the subject land under our agreement with the City; but we are keeping all avenues open, if and when, approached by the Government, City or State. We are also subject to IRS law and regulations.

Very truly yours,

SANTA FE ESTATES, INCORPORATED

David McNeill

David McNeill, President

DMcN:taw

CC: Honorable Manuel Lujan
Honorable Bill Richardson
Honorable Louis Montaño
Honorable Tony Anaya